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ON

THE ORIGINAL TEXT

OF

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

LEONARD C. BOWLES, 50 WASHINGTON STREET

1829.

Price 4 Cents.

This tract is taken from the Introduction to the Improved Version. It will be followed by others, designed, in connexion with this, to bring within the reach of the common reader facts and truths concerning the scriptures, that may correct erroneous apprehensions of their nature, and at the same time establish a just reverence for these invaluable writings, on which are built the faith and hope of Christians. It will here be seen both how unjust are the complaints sometimes made respecting alterations of the New Testament, and what reason we have for confidence in the general integrity of the copies.

Boston——Stereotyped by
Lyman Thurston & Co.

ON

THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

SECTION I.

CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.—DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE DISPUTED AND THE UNDISPUTED BOOKS.

THE Canon of the New Testament is a collection of books written by the apostles; or by men who were companions of the apostles, and who wrote under their inspection.

These books are called the Canon, from a Greek word which signifies *a rule*, because to a christian they constitute the only proper and sufficient rule of faith and practice.

These books are also called The Scriptures, or *The Writings*, because these Writings are held by christians in the highest estimation. They are the Scriptures of the New Testament, or, more properly speaking, of the New Covenant, because they contain a complete account of the christian dispensation, which is described as a covenant, by which Almighty God engages to bestow eternal life upon the penitent and virtuous believer in Christ. For this reason the christian scriptures, and

particularly the books which contain the history of Jesus Christ, are called the Gospel, or *Good news*, as these sacred writings contain the best tidings which could be communicated to mankind.

The Canon of Scripture is either the Received Canon or the True.

The *Received Canon* comprehends the whole of that collection of books which is contained in the New Testament, and which are generally received by christians as of apostolical authority. The *True Canon* consists of those books only, the genuineness of which is established upon satisfactory evidence.

When, or by whom, the received Canon was formed is not certainly known. It has been commonly believed that it was fixed by the council of Laodicea A. D. 364, but this is certainly a mistake. The first catalogue of canonical books, which is now extant, was drawn up by Origen A. D. 210. It leaves out the Epistles of James and Jude.

The genuineness and authority of every book in the New Testament rest upon its own specific evidence. No person, nor any body of men, has any right authoritatively to determine concerning any book, that it is canonical and of apostolical authority. Every sincere and diligent inquirer has a right to judge for himself, after due examination, what he is to receive as the rule of his faith and practice.

The most important distinction of the books of the New Testament, is that mentioned by Eusebius, bishop of Cesarea, in the third book of his Ecclesiastical History. He distinguishes them into the books which were universally acknowledged, and those, which, though generally received, were by some disputed.

The books universally acknowledged are, the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of Paul, the first Epistle of Peter, and the first Epistle of John. 'These only,' says Dr. Lardner, 'should be of the highest authority, from which doctrines of religion may be proved.'

The disputed books are, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James, the second of Peter, the second and third of John, the Epistle of Jude, and the Revelation. 'These,' says Dr. Lardner, 'should be allowed to be publicly read in christian assemblies, for the edification of the people, but not be alleged as affording alone sufficient proof of any doctrine.'

These distinctions prove the great pains which were taken by the primitive christians in forming the Canon, and their solicitude, not to admit any book into the code of the New Testament, of the genuineness of which they had not the clearest evidence. It is a distinction of great importance to all, who desire to appreciate rightly the value and authority of the several books, which compose the received Canon.

SECTION II.

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE RECEIVED TEXT.—EDITIONS OF THE GREEK TESTAMENT BY CARDINAL XIMENES, ERASMUS ROBERT STEPHENS, BEZA, AND ELZEVIR.

A TEXT perfectly correct, that is, which shall in every particular exactly correspond with the autographs (the original manuscripts) of the apostles and evangelists, is not to be expected. We must content ourselves with

approximating as nearly as possible to the original. The utility of this is too obvious to need either proof or illustration.

The Received Text of the New Testament is that which is in general use.

The degree of credit which is due to the accuracy of the Received Text will appear from the following brief detail of facts.

The New Testament was originally written in Greek: perhaps with the exception of the Gospel of Matthew, and the Epistle to the Hebrews; of which books, however, the earliest copies extant are in the Greek language.

Previously to the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the Greek copies were grown into disuse: the priests used an imperfect Latin translation in the public offices of religion, and all translations into the vulgar tongue for the use of the common people were prohibited or discouraged.

In the beginning of the sixteenth century, Cardinal Ximenes printed, at Alcala in Spain, a magnificent edition of the whole Bible in several languages. In this edition was contained a copy of the New Testament in Greek; which was made from a collation of various manuscripts, which were then thought to be of great authority, but which are now known to have been of little value. This edition, which is commonly called the Complutensian Polyglot, from *Complutum*, the Roman name for Alcala, was not licensed for publication till A. D. 1522, though it had been printed many years before. The manuscripts from which it was published are now irrecoverably lost, having been sold by the librarian to a rocket-maker about the year 1750.

A. D. 1516, Erasmus, residing at Basle in Switzerland, for the purpose of superintending the publication of the works of Jerome, was employed by Froben the printer, to publish an edition of the Greek Testament, from a few manuscripts which he found in the vicinity of that city, all of which were modern and comparatively of little value. Erasmus was not allowed time sufficient to revise the publication with that attention and care, which the importance of the work required: he complains that the persons whom he employed to correct the press, sometimes altered the copy without his permission, and he acknowledges that his first edition was very incorrect. He published a fourth edition A. D. 1527, in which, to obviate the clamor of bigots, he introduced many alterations to make it agree with the edition of Cardinal Ximenes.

A. D. 1550, Robert Stephens, a learned printer at Paris, published a splendid edition of the New Testament in Greek; in which he availed himself of the Complutensian Polyglot, and likewise of the permission granted by the king of France to collate fifteen manuscripts in the Royal Library. Most of these manuscripts are to this day in the National or Imperial Library at Paris, and are found to contain only parts of the New Testament; and few of them are either of great antiquity or of much value. They were collated and the various readings noted by Henry Stephens, the son of Robert, a youth about eighteen years of age. This book, being splendidly printed, with great professions of accuracy by the editor, was long supposed to be a correct and immaculate work: but upon closer inspection it has been discovered to abound with errors. The text, excepting the Revelation, in which he follows

the Complutensian edition, is almost wholly copied from the fifth edition of Erasmus, with very few and inconsiderable variations.*

A. D. 1589, Theodore Beza, professor of theology at Geneva, and successor to John Calvin, published a critical edition of the Greek Testament, in which he made use of Robert Stephens's own copy, with many additional various readings from the manuscripts collated by Henry Stephens. Beza was also in possession of two most ancient and most valuable manuscripts; one of which, containing the Gospels and the Acts in Greek and Latin, he afterwards gave to the University of Cambridge; and the other, called the Clermont manuscript, which contained the Epistles of Paul, was transferred to the Royal Library at Paris. Beza took but little pains, and exercised but little judgment, in the correction of the text and the selection of the best readings. Nevertheless the text of Beza being esteemed the most accurate of those which had then been published, was selected as the standard of the English version published by authority. Beza's text, however, appears in fact to be nothing more, than a republication of Robert Stephens's with some trifling variations.

A. D. 1624, an edition of the Greek Testament was

* Robert Stephens was the person who divided the New Testament into verses. He performed this task while he was upon a journey from Lyons to Paris, in order to adapt it to a Greek Concordance which he was then preparing for the press. He placed the figures in the margin of his page. The first edition, in which the verses were printed separate with the number prefixed to each, was the English New Testament, printed at Geneva, A. D. 1557. The division into chapters had been made in the thirteenth century by Cardinal Hugo, to adapt the New Testament to a Latin Concordance.

published at Leyden, at the office of the Elzevirs, who were the most eminent printers of the time. The editor who superintended the publication is unknown. This edition differs very little from the text of Robert Stephens. A few variations are admitted from the edition of Beza, and a very few more upon some unknown authority; but it does not appear that the editor was in possession of any manuscript. This edition however being elegantly printed, and the Elzevirs being in high reputation for correctness of typography, it was unaccountably taken for granted that it exhibited a pure and perfect text. This, therefore, became the standard of all succeeding editions, from which few editors till very lately have presumed to vary: and this constitutes the 'Received Text.'

Thus it appears, that the Received Text stands upon the authority of the unknown editor of the Elzevir edition, who copied the text of Robert Stephens, introducing a few variations from that of Beza. The edition of Beza was also taken from that of Robert Stephens, with a few trifling and sometimes even arbitrary alterations. But Robert Stephens's famous edition of A. D. 1550 is a close copy of the fifth edition of Erasmus, with some alterations in the book of Revelation from the Complutensian Polyglot, and the addition of a few various readings, collected by a youth of eighteen, from fifteen manuscripts of little value. And, finally, Erasmus's edition itself, which is the prototype of them all, was formed hastily and negligently from a few manuscripts of little authority, which accidentally came into his possession at Basle, where he was engaged by Froben in editing the works of Jerome, and where he had no further assistance, than what he could derive from the Vul-

gate Version, and from inaccurate editions of some of the early ecclesiastical writers.

From the few advantages which were possessed, and from the little care which was taken, by the early editors, it may justly be concluded, not only that the Received Text is not a perfect copy of the apostolic originals, but that it is still capable of very considerable improvement, by the same means, which are adopted by men of learning and sagacity, for correcting and restoring the text of other ancient writers.

SECTION III.

MEANS OF IMPROVING THE RECEIVED TEXT.—ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS.—VATICAN, ALEXANDRINE, CAMBRIDGE, CLERMONT, EPHREM.

THE books of the New Testament, having been more highly valued, more generally circulated, more attentively studied, more accurately transcribed, and more frequently cited, than the works of any other ancient author, the Text is consequently less corrupted, and the means of correcting and restoring it are far more abundant, than of any other work of equal antiquity.

I. The first and best source of materials for improving the Text is the collation of Ancient Manuscripts.

The early editors of the New Testament possessed but few manuscripts; and those of inferior value. Those of the Complutensian editors are destroyed, but they were not numerous, nor of great account. Erasmus consulted only five or six; and R. Stephens fifteen.

Beza indeed possessed two of the most ancient and valuable manuscripts now extant, the Cambridge and the Clermont; but he made very little use of them. So that the Received Text rests upon the authority of no more than twenty or thirty manuscripts, most of which are of little note.

But since the Received Text was completed by the Elzevir edition of 1624, upwards of three hundred manuscripts, either of the whole or of different parts of the New Testament, have been collated by learned men, with much care, industry, and skill. Of these manuscripts some are of far greater antiquity and authority, than any of those upon which the Received Text is founded; Beza's manuscripts only excepted. From these manuscripts a vast number of various readings have been extracted, by the assistance of which the Received Text has been greatly improved.

Ancient manuscripts are commonly written upon parchment. The most ancient are written in what are called *uncial* or square capital letters. In some copies the ink has been effaced, and the works of some later author have been written upon the same parchment; but the form of the original letters still remains distinguishable even under the more modern writing. Very few manuscripts contain the whole New Testament; and the most ancient are often mutilated and imperfect, and usually contain many corrections: but whether these corrections are improvements or otherwise, cannot easily be ascertained.

Those manuscripts which are most ancient, and of the highest reputation, are

1. The Vatican Manuscript, which was formerly preserved at Rome in the Vatican Library, but is now

removed to the Imperial Library at Paris. The earliest date assigned to this manuscript is the third century; the latest is the fifth or sixth. It is written in large uncial letters, and originally contained the whole of the Old and New Testament. Some of the last leaves are wanting. The ink in some places is faded, and the letters have been retouched by a skilful and faithful hand.

2. The ALEXANDRINE Manuscript was presented by Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, and afterwards of Constantinople, to Charles the First, king of England, and is now deposited in the British Museum. It was probably written in Egypt: it consists of four volumes, containing both the Old Testament and the New, in the large uncial character. Dr. Woide conjectures that it was written in the latter end of the fourth century; but some critics bring it down as low as the sixth.

3 The CAMBRIDGE Manuscript, or CODEX BEZÆ, contains the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles. It is written very fair, and in the large uncial letters. This manuscript yields in antiquity to none but the Vatican, and is supposed to have been used as a public copy for reading in the church. Theodore Beza made some use of it for his edition of the New Testament, and afterwards gave it to the University of Cambridge, where it is now deposited in the public library.

4. The CLERMONT Manuscript contains the Epistles of Paul; the Epistle to the Hebrews is written by a later hand. This manuscript also belonged to Beza, who professed to have received it from Clermont in Beauvaisis, and who made use of it in his edition of the Greek Testament. It is now deposited in the Imperial Library at Paris.

5. The EPHREM Manuscript is in the Imperial Library at Paris. It was written upon vellum in large and elegant characters, the ink of which was effaced with great care to make room for the works of Ephrem the Syrian, a writer of some note in the sixth century. The original characters are, however, in many places legible under the writing of Ephrem's Works. This, which Griesbach calls a most ancient and excellent manuscript, lay for many years unnoticed, and was first discovered by Dr. Allix in the beginning of the eighteenth century; since which time it has been repeatedly and accurately examined by the learned. The Ephrem Manuscript is of high antiquity, at least of the seventh century, and probably much earlier. It originally contained the whole Old and New Testament, but many leaves are lost; the rest are tacked together in great disorder, and many passages are totally illegible.

Besides these, about twenty other manuscripts, in large letters, of different portions of the New Testament, have been collated, and some hundreds in small characters, many of which are in high estimation. But those described above are of the highest antiquity and repute.

SECTION IV.

MEANS OF CORRECTING THE RECEIVED TEXT CONTINUED.—ANCIENT VERSIONS.—ECCLESIASTICAL WRITERS.

II. THE Received Text is corrected by the assistance of the ancient Versions.

The christian religion having been rapidly propagated through all nations, the writings of the Apostles and

Evangelists were soon translated into different languages, and many of these versions are still extant.

Every new version became an additional security to the text. It is not to be imagined, whatever might be the inclinations of some individuals, or of particular churches, to corrupt the Scriptures, that all churches of all nations would agree in the same interpolations or omissions. Some of the countries where Christianity was professed were beyond the limits of the Roman empire: and it is not to be believed that the Christians of these countries would suffer their versions to be altered, to conform to the peculiarities of the Church of Rome. The general agreement, therefore, of the ancient versions with the Greek copies which are now extant, forms a very strong presumption in favor of the genuineness of the books of the New Testament. Nevertheless, as the Received Text is not perfectly correct, the ancient versions are often of singular use in discovering the true reading of a doubtful passage. They are sometimes preferable even to manuscripts themselves; for some of these versions were made from manuscripts, which were more ancient and more correct than any which are now extant. They are not all of equal value, some being of greater antiquity, and more correctly translated than others. Some indeed are not original versions, but are merely translations of preceding versions.

Of all the ancient versions, the Syriac is reckoned to be of the most remote antiquity and of the highest authority. There are two Syriac versions. The most ancient and valuable, called the Peshito, was brought into Europe A. D. 1552, and printed at Vienna at the expense of the Emperor Maximilian. It contains only those books which according to Eusebius were uni-

versally acknowledged; together with the Epistle of James: and it is in general use among the Syrian christians of every sect. These are strong presumptive evidences of its great antiquity.

A later Syriac version, more literal, but less elegant, was made in the sixth century under the inspection of Philoxenus, bishop of Hierapolis, from whom it is called the Philoxenian Version.

Two very ancient versions of the New Testament, of high reputation, in the old Egyptian language, for the use of the Christians who abounded in Egypt, are still extant. One is called the Coptic, the other, the Sahidic. The former is the dialect of the Lower, the latter of the Upper Egypt. The Coptic version is still read in the churches of Lower Egypt, though it is not understood. It is accompanied with an Arabic translation which is more intelligible to the hearers.

The Ethiopic version is used in Abyssinia. It contains the whole of the New Testament, and is supposed to have been made in the fourth century.

Many Arabic versions are extant, but it is believed that none of them is of greater antiquity than the seventh century. The Armenian version was made in the fifth century: it would be of great value if genuine copies could be procured, but those which we have are notoriously corrupted from the Latin.

There are many Latin versions of the New Testament, some of which are of great antiquity, and some are full of barbarisms. By order of pope Benedict XIV. A. D. 1749, a magnificent edition of four of these versions was published at Rome in four folio volumes. These are sometimes called the Italic versions, to distinguish them from the Vulgate.

The Latin Vulgate version was made by Jerome in the fourth century, by order of pope Damasus. Jerome was well qualified for the office by his knowledge, learning, and industry: he performed it with great care, and completed his undertaking A. D. [illegible]. This translation was very generally received and read in the Latin churches. The Council of Trent pronounced it to be authentic, and ordered it to be used whenever the Bible was publicly read, and in all disputations, sermons, and expositions. In pursuance of an order of this council a pompous edition of the Vulgate was printed at Louvain A. D. 1574. Sixtus V. published a new edition A. D. 1590, which he declared to be the authentic Vulgate, and that it was to continue forever: notwithstanding which his successor Clement VIII published another edition very different from and in some passages contradictory to, that of Sixtus: this he asserted to be the only authentic copy:—a difference of judgment, which exposed the pretensions of the popes to infallibility, to the sarcastic animadversions of the protestant writers.

The protestant divines of the sixteenth century underrated the value of the Vulgate version, from opposition to the papists, who were too blindly attached to it. The truth is, that the Vulgate is found, in its most important various readings, to agree with the most approved manuscripts, and with the ancient versions of the best authority: so that the character of this version has risen greatly in the estimation of modern critics.

III. The Received Text is corrected, by comparing it with quotations from the New Testament, which occur in the works of the ancient ecclesiastical writers.

These quotations are very numerous in the writings of the Fathers, from the second century downwards;

and are of the greatest use in rectifying the text of the New Testament.

It ought, however, to be remembered, that these writers sometimes quoted from memory, and sometimes merely by way of accommodation ; in which cases they often quote loosely and inaccurately, and their citations are of little use. These citations therefore are of the greatest value, when they profess to quote from manuscripts which lie before them, and especially if they criticise or comment upon the text itself.

With these limitations, quotations from the New Testament, which occur in the works of ancient ecclesiastical writers, are of the highest value and authority ; for they quoted from manuscripts of more remote antiquity than any which are now extant : so that their authority in favor of a various reading is sometimes paramount to every other.

The ecclesiastical writers sometimes cite as scripture, texts, which are not to be found in any manuscript or version now extant. On the other hand, their silence with respect to some disputed texts is a demonstration that such texts were not in their copies. That 1 Tim. iii. 16. 'God manifest in the flesh,' and 1 John v. 7. 'There are three that bear record in heaven,' &c. were never cited by any ecclesiastical writer before the fifth or the sixth century, notwithstanding the vehemence with which the Arian controversy was conducted, is a proof that these texts were not to be found in any manuscripts then existing, and therefore that they are certainly spurious.

SECTION V.

CRITICAL EDITIONS OF THE GREEK TESTAMENT.—MILL, WETSTEIN, GRIESBACH.

After the publication of the beautiful Elzevir edition of the New Testament in 1624, the learned world appeared to remain satisfied with the Received Text, as if it were absolutely perfect and incapable of improvement, till the commencement of the eighteenth century, when the text of the New Testament again became the object of diligent and accurate revision.

The first thing which raised the attention of the learned to this interesting inquiry, was the appearance of the celebrated edition of Dr. John Mill, which was published at Oxford, A. D. 1707. It was the fruit of thirty years' laborious application; and the author survived the publication but fourteen days. He was encouraged and assisted in the work by Dr. John Fell, Bishop of Oxford. He took as his text the third edition of Stephens; and from ancient manuscripts, versions, and quotations, he has collected about thirty thousand various readings, which he has printed under the text. Michaelis says, that with Mill's edition commences the manhood of criticism, with respect to the New Testament.

The celebrated edition of John James Wetstein was published at Amsterdam in two volumes folio, A. D. 1751, 1752. Of this edition Michaelis says, that 'it is of all editions of the Greek Testament the most important.' Immediately below his text he has placed those readings which he regards as genuine, and which in his judgment ought to be introduced into the text. Below

these are arranged his collection of various readings with their respective authorities. In this respect, it is allowed that he has done more than all his predecessors together. Underneath the various readings in Wetstein's edition are printed his notes. These are numerous and invaluable. They are philological, critical, and explanatory. They contain a great number of parallel passages from the classics, and of quotations from the Talmudists, which tend to elucidate the idioms of the language or the customs of the Jews. They are accompanied with many judicious observations, and supply an inexhaustible fund of theological and critical information. It is computed that the quotations in Wetstein's volumes amount to upwards of a million.

The first edition of the Greek Testament by Dr. John James Griesbach, in two volumes octavo, was published A. D. 1775 and 1777. The second edition, very much enlarged and improved, appeared A. D. 1796 and 1806.

This is an edition of unrivalled excellence and importance, the publication of which will constitute a memorable era in the history of Scripture criticism. In the construction of this admirable work the learned editor had two objects in view. The first was to exhibit to the public a text of the Greek Testament, as correct, and as nearly approximating to its original purity, as it could be made by the assistance of that immense quantity of critical materials, which had been accumulating during the last century. And, secondly, to compress a great mass of critical information into as narrow a compass as possible, in order to bring it within the reach of those, who could not afford either the time, the labor, or the expense, which would be necessary to col-

lect it from those numerous and expensive volumes in which it was diffused.

As the basis of his own edition, Dr. Griesbach has selected the Elzevir text, 1624, every, the most minute, variation from which he carefully notes. No alteration is admitted which is not fully warranted by the established laws of just and rational criticism. The various readings, and the authorities by which they are supported, are collected from nearly four hundred manuscripts, besides ancient versions and ecclesiastical writers. Yet he does not presume to affirm that he has exhibited a perfect text; he only professes to have made the best use in his power of the materials in his possession, for correcting and improving the Received Text; fairly stating the grounds of his own decisions, and leaving others to form their own opinion.

Many other valuable editions of the Greek New Testament have been published, but these are the most worthy of notice.

SECTION VI.

GREAT NUMBER OF VARIOUS READINGS.—INFERENCES.—PROPRIETY OF EDITING A CORRECT TEXT.

The number of various readings collected by Dr. Mill is computed at thirty thousand. And it is reasonable to believe that since the publication of his celebrated edition, a hundred thousand at least have been added to the list, by the indefatigable industry of those learned critics who have succeeded to his labors, and by the great extension of the field of their operations, in con-

sequence of the additional number of manuscripts and versions, which have been since discovered and collated.

These various readings, though very numerous, do not in any degree affect the general credit and integrity of the text; the general uniformity of which, in so many copies, scattered through almost all countries in the known world, and in so great a variety of languages, is truly astonishing, and demonstrates both the veneration in which the Scriptures were held, and the great care which was taken in transcribing them. Of the hundred and thirty thousand various readings which have been discovered by the sagacity and diligence of collators, not one tenth, nor one hundredth part, make any perceptible, or at least any material, variation in the sense. This will appear credible, if we consider that every, the minutest, deviation from the Received Text has been carefully noted; so that the insertion or omission of an article, the substitution of a word for its equivalent, the transposition of a word or two in a sentence, and even variations in orthography, have been added to the catalogue of various readings.

In those variations, which in some measure affect the sense, the true reading often shines forth with a lustre of evidence which is perfectly satisfactory to the judicious inquirer. In other cases, where the true reading cannot be exactly ascertained, it is of little or no consequence which of the readings is adopted, e. g. whether we read 'Paul the servant,' or 'Paul the prisoner' of Jesus Christ, Philem. ver. 1. Also, where the various readings are of considerable importance, consisting, for example, in the omission or addition of sentences or paragraphs, the authenticity of the rest of the book re-

mains wholly unaffected, whatever decision may be passed upon the passages in question.

The various readings which affect the doctrines of Christianity are very few: yet some of these are of great importance; viz. Acts xx. 28; 1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 John v. 7. Of those passages which can be justly regarded as *wilful* interpolations, the number is very small indeed; and of these, the last mentioned text, 1 John v. 7. is by far the most notorious, and most universally acknowledged and reprobated.

Upon the whole, we may remark, that the number and antiquity of the manuscripts which contain the whole or different parts of the New Testament, the variety of ancient versions, and the multitude of quotations from these sacred books in the early christian writers, from the second century downwards, constitute a body of evidence in favor of the genuineness and authenticity of the Christian Scriptures, far beyond that of any other book of equal antiquity.

Nevertheless, the immense number of various readings in the text of the New Testament, many of which cannot be satisfactorily settled by the most unwearied assiduity or the acutest sagacity of critical investigation, demonstrates, that no superstitious regard is due to the mere language of the Received Text, which, like the works of other ancient authors, is open to rational and liberal criticism. Ignorant and injudicious persons are sometimes apprehensive, that men's regard to the christian religion will be impaired, and their veneration for the Scriptures diminished, if the infallibilty of the Received Text is called in question. But intelligent and well-informed readers are apprized, that the great practical truths of the christian religion do not rest upon

verbal niceties, but consist in obvious conclusions from notorious and well-established facts. The apostolic summary of the christian faith is, 'that God will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men in that he hath raised him from the dead.' This doctrine beams forth with unclouded splendor from every page of the New Testament, whatever becomes of the correctness and accuracy of the Received Text. And whether greater respect be shown to the writers of the Christian Scriptures and to their works, by adopting, as infallible, the imperfect editions of Erasmus and Stephens, of Beza and Elzevir, than by endeavouring to approximate as nearly as possible to the apostolic originals, by a sober and judicious use of the ample materials, which the labors of the learned have supplied for the purpose of rational criticism, let candor and good sense determine. In some few instances the alteration of the Received Text is indispensably requisite, in order to correct the erroneous impression conveyed by a false reading: and in all cases a change is desirable, where the proposed alteration is supported by competent evidence. If it be justly regarded as a useful and an honorable office to publish a correct edition of the works of a classical author, it cannot surely be reckoned less important, or less honorable, to exhibit the text of the sacred writings in a form as nearly as possible approaching to the original standard.

1st Series. No. 27.

THE

POWER OF UNITARIANISM

OVER THE AFFECTIONS.

BY JOHN BRAZER.

SECOND EDITION.

PRINTED FOR THE

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BOSTON,

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1832.

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This discourse was delivered at the ordination of Rev. Jonathan Cole, as Pastor of the First Congregational Society in Kingston, Mass. A few copies were printed in an 8vo form for the Society, and it is now, by permission of the author, adopted into the series of tracts published by the Amer. Unit. Assoc. with such slight alterations, as were necessary to prevent its retaining the appearance of an occasional sermon.

POWER OF UNITARIANISM.

CHRISTIANITY is, certainly, a rational system, but it is not therefore merely speculative and cold. It has its foundation, indeed, in the convictions of the mind, but it is not therefore excluded from the heart. It is not merely a truth, but a sentiment; a deep, penetrating, thorough, soul-felt sentiment. It is not merely belief, nor yet merely practice; but while it includes both, it implies something more than either; something to render faith operative and practice efficient; namely, a consistent, an energetic, an enlightened, a devoted zeal.

There is reason to believe that the distinguishing views of Unitarian Christians are, in this respect, often misunderstood, or misrepresented. It is stated as a serious objection to them, that they exist chiefly but as a barren notion of the head; that they are wanting in power over the affections; that they can breathe no new and fervid life into our spiritual natures; and that they tend, in consequence, to produce in those who profess them lukewarmness and indifference to the whole subject of religion. I believe this objection to be unfounded and injurious. Believing, moreover, a fair discussion of great principles to be an essential, if not the only means, which God, in his providence, has appointed, of ascertaining the

truth, I shrink not from a defence of those which are believed to be unutterably important, even though they should be controversial in their nature. And if, in the following remarks, I shall contrast our views of Christianity with those of the more popular theology, to the disadvantage of the latter, it is because I shall feel compelled to do so in the conscientious vindication of our own, and by the line of argument I have deemed it proper to pursue. I have no desire to widen the differences in opinion between our fellow Christians and ourselves, still less to exasperate feelings already but too much excited; and my earnest prayer for them and us is, that the Spirit of Truth may lead us both into all important truth.

I propose, first, to examine the true nature and value of the objection above mentioned; secondly, to remark on some circumstances which may have conspired to give it an appearance of reality; and, thirdly, to shew, in some particulars, that, in point of fact, our views of christian truth are not justly liable to any such objection.

My first remark, in examining the validity of the objection, is, that *the truth or value of any system of faith is not to be decided by the conduct of its professors.* It is obvious that there are many influences continually operating upon men's minds, which interfere with and counteract the legitimate effects of their religious belief. I cannot stop to illustrate so plain a point as this. Examples enough present themselves on every side. Each individual who hears me has reason to mourn, that his conduct is so little answerable to his acknowledged rules of duty. Indeed, if a system is to be tried by the conduct of its followers, Christianity itself will be found liable to objection, even as exhibited by the earliest and best of its followers. St Paul most feelingly declares, 'the

good that I would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do.' Was St Paul's faith therefore incorrect, inoperative and dead ? Is it not obvious that any and all systems are to be estimated according to their principles, and not according to the conduct of those who embrace them? Could it therefore be substantiated, that as a class of Christians we want zeal and earnestness, it could only prove our own unworthiness, but would leave untouched the substantial value of our faith.

I next observe that if the general conduct of any class of Christians be no decisive evidence of the value of their religious system, *still less is that excitement and fervency of spirit which is commonly denominated zeal.* It is certainly no evidence either of real christian attainment, or of the truth, or of the value of religious opinions.

Not, first, of *christian attainment.* It is worthy of remark, the Scriptures more frequently speak of a bad and perverted, than of a praiseworthy zeal. If undirected by higher principles, like any other blind excitement of the feelings, it will become a fever of the heart and brain. Instead of diffusing a cheerful and life-inspiring warmth into the soul, it will become a consuming fire. Instead of exciting all the kind and generous affections into a healthy action, it will call to its aid all the fierce and angry passions ; passions which will rage yet more relentlessly, that they are summoned at the call of conscience. 'I bear them record,' says an apostle, 'that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge;' and the world has never been without examples of the same ignorant zeal. An excitement of mind on the subject of religion, which leads men, in a disregard of the proprieties of person, place, time, and occasion, to obtrude sacred themes, where they will only be slighted or ridi

ended; an undue attention to the forms and means of religion, with an utter forgetfulness of its substance and end; a narrow and bigoted attachment to some peculiar doctrines, which closes the mind against further light: — all these are examples of an uninstructed zeal. And, again, 'we may be zealously affected, but not well.' Instances are, by no means, rare of what has been emphatically called a 'cursed ungodliness of zeal;' a zeal which sins against the primal law of christian charity; a zeal which has trampled upon all the rights of men; the rights of property, person, and life; the right of private judgment; a zeal which has lighted the fires of persecution, and led forth armed hosts to legislate for men's consciences, and to write its creeds on men's hearts with the sword's point. And shall we, with these examples before us, take mere zeal as the criterion of the christian character?

Nor, secondly, is this zeal any decisive, nay, any evidence at all, of the *truth of religious opinions*. If it were, the criterion of truth would be feeling, passion, and not judgment and reason; and the greater the heat and ferment which could be excited in behalf of any opinions, the greater would be the evidence of their truth. But are any willing to abide by the necessary consequences of a rule like this? If so, let them remember, that Heathens, Pagans, Mohammedans, Infidels, must have their claims allowed; for all, if not zealots, have zealots among them, and zeal is the decisive characteristic of truth. Nor may we stop here. There is not a sect in Christendom that has not been surpassed in zeal by the votaries of dark and dreadful superstitions. And are these to be preferred before those humble followers of Jesus, whose zeal is chastised into a more serene and sober fervency?

Nor, thirdly, is this zeal a criterion of the *value or importance of religious opinions.* It is matter of obvious remark, that men are often most zealous in regard to things of comparatively little moment. There is no stronger confirmation of this, than is furnished by the history of religious controversy. It is a melancholy truth, to which the annals of the church, in almost every age, bear the fullest attestation, that the most intense and heated zeal has ever been called forth in the support and defence of opinions, in themselves, most unimportant. Minute differences in doctrine, trifling ceremonies, disputes concerning outward apparel, the observance of fasts and feast days, these and numberless other subjects as trifling, have excited a zeal which could only be quenched by the outpouring of innocent blood. Human nature scarcely anywhere appears under so humiliating an aspect, as it wears in the pages of ecclesiastical history. Not only do we find there idle theories and empty forms preferred before the plain and solid truths of the gospel, but an excess of zeal enlisted in their support, which is often extravagant in precise proportion to their insignificance.

Mere zeal, then, is no decisive proof, either of the reality of christian attainments, or of the soundness or value of the religious opinions, with which it is allied. What, then, it may be asked, is zeal of no importance in our religious concerns? Is it to be swept from the catalogue of christian motives and influences? Are we not, in express words, required to be 'fervent in spirit?' I answer that it is of great and essential importance; that it is to be cherished and cultivated in our inmost hearts: and that without the fervency it inspires we must despair of spiritual strength and growth. But what zeal is thus

imporant? This is the great question. It is not an excitement of the feelings, which may have more of earth in it than of heaven; not a zeal which is unenlightened and undirected by God's word; not a zeal which disregards the claims and feelings of others; not a zeal which is dogmatical; not a zeal which is intolerant; not a zeal which is exclusive; not a zeal which is pharisaically proud; not a zeal which 'stirreth up the city and maketh tumults;'—but a true christian zeal; a zeal which springs from love to God and love to man; a zeal which animated our Saviour and Lord to live and die for a sinful world; a zeal which prompted the holy apostles to pray and weep before God for all men; to endure contempt and persecution, winds and tempests, seas and prisons, mockings and scourgings, fastings and poverty, labors and wretchedness, and finally to bind their brows with the thorny crown of martyrdom, for their sake: a zeal of humility, a zeal of kindness; in a word, a zeal of a true heaven-born christian charity, which beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things: of a charity which never faileth.

We do most highly value a zeal like this. We would enlist all our good affections in the service of our religion. We believe they are necessary to give animation to principle and efficacy to good intentions. We fear being so much afraid of the excesses of fanaticism, as not to allow these affections their rightful influence. We should think it a strong objection to any system of faith, that it had no direct tendency to call them into strong and vigorous exercise. We believe, as fully as any can, that it is utterly vain to bow at the shrines of our religion, if we do not lay our hearts upon her altars.

I have been thus circumstantial, perhaps too circumstan-

tial, on this part of the subject, because it brings into plain view a sad and wide spread error; and because it indicates and furnishes the proper reply to the objection which I have undertaken to answer. It is often strangely thought, that religious opinions are to be valued by the *degree* of zeal, good or bad, right or wrong, they are capable of producing, or that can, by any means, be identified with them; and that this zeal sends back upon the opinions themselves a redeeming and sanctifying influence. Nothing is more common than to hear persons claiming a preference for their religious belief, on account of their zeal in giving, their zeal in proselytizing, their zeal in making individual sacrifices; and it is a claim which too often passes, without examination, as valid. But it is, nevertheless, true, that it is not the quantity of zeal only which is to be taken into the account, but also its nature and effects.

If the foregoing remarks are just, it is obvious, in the first place, that no legitimate inference against the truth or importance of any system of faith can be derived from the conduct of its professors: and secondly, that the mere quantity of zeal which is enlisted by any form of religious faith, or is by any means conjoined with it, affords no test, either of christian attainment, or of the truth or value of the opinions holden. Though the fact, then, be admitted, that we want that zeal on which some of our christian brethren value themselves, and decry us, the inference from it is lame, null and worthless.

I might safely, it is believed, rest my reply to the objection under discussion, on these grounds. But the subject demands a wider range of remark. Be it then observed, in the second place, that there are many considerations which modify our zeal, and the expressions

of it, which do not, in the slightest degree, impair its vitality and power as a principle of conduct. And I now proceed to advert, as was proposed, to some of those circumstances which have conspired to give our views of christian truth an appearance, I say an appearance, of being speculative, cold, and inoperative upon the affections.

One of the circumstances, which has had, as is believed, this effect, is *the manner in which they have sometimes been inculcated.* I would speak with a becoming diffidence on this subject, and as one who claims no exemption from what he cannot but think is a faulty method of enforcing the claims of any religion. Our views, then, of Christianity, it is apprehended, have been but too often presented in a manner cold, formal, and didactic; as if they were mere truths in moral philosophy; as if it were enough to make men Christians, to convince them that it is wise and expedient to become Christians; as if the reasoning head were alone to be consulted, and not the believing heart; as if the affections were not necessary to impart life and vigor to our convictions. In those topics, by which the will is to be influenced as well as the mind instructed; where information is not so necessary as persuasion; where impression is more important than conviction; where the infinite fallacies of self-deceit are to be detected; the moral infirmities of men probed; a stubborn worldliness to be broken; the iron chains of habits to be rent asunder; the palsied conscience to be quickened; where, in a word, light is to be thrown in upon the dark concealments of self-love, and the heart is to be touched and the deeper feelings interested; mere abstract speculations, however elegant, refined, or just, are frigid, ill-adapted and unaffecting.

We want something which bears more the stamp of reality; something which is less staid and official; something, too, more distinct, more direct, close and plain-spoken; something to assure us that *we* are the persons addressed, *we* are the persons interested; something to convince us that we are not listening to a discourse on abstract questions in morals, but to the gospel of Jesus Christ; a gospel enforced by all that a rational being can hope or fear; a gospel addressed to *us* individually, and which *we* are to receive or reject at our own personal peril.

There is a manner of writing, too, which is, in itself, unexceptionable, and yet utterly bad as a means of persuasion. A composition may be faultless, saving only that it is without force. It is possible to fill up the time with a sermon, which shall have 'proper words in proper places,' which shall exhibit throughout a high literary finish, and be illustrated, moreover, with fine and tasteful imagery; but which, after all, will be, so far as respects the legitimate objects of preaching, less affecting than the wild strains of fanaticism, as powerless as the prattle of a child. Great results are sacrificed in a studied attention to details; powerful impression, in a pursuit of the minor graces of diction; the benefit of the many, in an excessive deference to the refined tastes of a few. Anything, almost, that has pith and point is better than this sentence-making, this tame and lifeless rhetoric. The great, the noble, the commanding aim of the speaker, should ever be kept in view; and this is not the amusement, not the gratification of his hearers; still less their admiration of himself; but their conviction, their persuasion; it is to stamp deeply and irresistibly on their minds the impress of his own. 'I would rather,' says St Paul, 'speak five words with my understanding, that by my

voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.' And how much better, in point of effect, are those words which only play over the surface of the mind, than those in an unknown tongue?

Nor will the preacher, who feels the true dignity of his office, freeze his words as they fall from his lips, by his own apparent indifference to their import, or permit them to vibrate in a sleepy cadence, or to sink into a drowsy monotony. Nor when he speaks of themes that should strike and rouse the soul, will he speak as if he were performing a set task, but as if he were moved by a strong impulse to speak. He will endeavor to feel as well as to understand the truths he utters, feel them in their full import, feel too the responsibleness under which he is acting. Let him but gain this intimate apprehension of important truth, this real, this intense feeling of his subject; let him forget himself and all things else in the enforcement of his theme, and he need not ask for any other eloquence. He may forego, as secondary things, without a sigh or a care, all mere outside accomplishments, all mere graces of manner. He may be sure that he will not speak to dull and inapprehensive ears. The divine light within will irradiate his countenance; his whole manner will be imbued with a solemn, tender, affecting earnestness; his appeals will go like lightning to the souls of men, and penetrate to their very core. This is the foundation of true eloquence; this is the fountain of sympathy; this puts words of persuasion on the tongue; this gives the accents that tone of reality which was never yet mistaken; this is the Divinity which speaks within; this the voice of power, in mortal man, which none can withstand.

There are obvious causes for the adoption of the manner of inculcating our system of faith, which I have ventured to call in question, and which leave entirely untouched the entire seriousness and engagedness of its advocates. This system is primarily addressed to the understanding, and it is probable that a conviction of this fact has prevented more direct addresses to the affections and rendered the whole tone calm and subdued. In making the argument conclusive, it is often forgotten that the moving principle of the great mass of men is not so much abstract truth as strong sentiment. An abhorrence also of all fanaticism and extravagance, by a natural reaction, may have led to the opposite extreme of naked rationality and apparent indifference. There is often, too, perceived in men of sensitive natures that 'faulty bashfulness,' spoken of by one of the best of the English essayists, which, in an over-deference to the opinions of the audience, forgets a just respect for the truths they are about to deliver. But whatever the causes of this manner of communicating religious truth may be, the effect is certainly to be deprecated. Until the world becomes more intellectual than it now is, cold, dead words, though instinct with oracular wisdom, will fall, like snow-flakes on frozen ground, upon cold, dead hearts. Men wish to see, and have a right to expect, a correspondence between what is said and what is felt. And if they do not, they will be apt to infer that what drops so lifelessly from lifeless tongues, does not, in itself, possess much vitality or power. Now to apply these remarks to the precise object for which they were introduced, it is evident, that in whatever degree this apparent want of directness, interest, and fervor pervades the inculcation of our views

of Christianity, in the same degree will it be charged upon the views themselves. That there is no foundation, in point of fact, for this, will, I trust, appear in the sequel of the discourse.

Another circumstance which has given an appearance of coldness to our system of faith is, that *it is professedly rational.* By this is meant, that we endeavor to interpret the revelation of God, in the gospel of his Son, by the aid of those powers which belong to us as rational beings. We do not believe that these powers are superseded by a supernatural, uncontrollable influence; an influence imparted to some and withholden from others, upon no known and determinate law; and depending wholly on the arbitrary will of the common Father of mankind. Such a belief must necessarily inspire those who adopt it with an excessive fervency of spirit. But a faith which does not permit us to consider ourselves the especial favorites of Almighty God, and is ascertained by our rational faculties, assisted by his good spirit and revealed word, will naturally produce a more modified and guarded zeal; a zeal which is controlled by a reference to every personal and social duty, and devoted to appropriate objects, at fitting times, in a proper degree. Its first object will always be self-improvement, and next, the improvement of others; but always with an entire respect and deference to their character, condition, feelings, and rights. It will never seek to make a convert for the sake of making a convert, but from an earnest desire of making him a better and therefore a happier man. It will regard an attention to any of the means of religion, which are incompatible with a due performance of important personal or relative duty, as a desertion of a greater duty for a less. It is obvious that a zeal like this will be compara-

tively mild and retiring. It will not manifest itself in sudden and violent efforts, but in a silent and gradual consecration of the soul to God. It will be discovered, rather in conduct, than in profession; more in the solid, practical virtues which our Saviour inculcated and exemplified, than in 'prophesying, and attempting to do many wonderful works in his name.'

And in accordance with this general system, in the next place, *its professors feel bound to avoid all parade and show and ostentation.* And this is another circumstance that has doubtless visited upon their views of religion the imputation of a want of zeal and earnestness. They remember the strong denunciations of the Saviour against all those observances which have a direct reference to this world, while they seem to point to another. They remember his injunctions to conceal our alms, and retire from public observation, when we perform those duties, which are intended to disenthral our affections from earth and fix them on things above. They remember that 'the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.' They believe that the true spirit of Christianity, if it reign anywhere, reigns in the heart; and makes itself apparent, if at all, in the cheerful, quiet, kind, humble, yet earnest performance of every known duty: and that it has and wants no noisier herald than the unobtrusive evidence of a good and pious life. They do not consider violent religious excitements and commotions, by which the order of society, domestic peace, and the intimate relations of life are broken in upon, as the best proofs of a saving faith. They shrink from bringing their secret and peculiar struggles, trials, hopes, fears, and all the minute detail of their religious experience, into public view. They cannot understand the proprie-

ly, to say nothing of the delicacy, of laying their hearts open to the common gaze, and exposing to a vulgar curiosity all their private feelings. They reserve these inward movements of their souls, for the confidential sympathy of pious and bosom friends, and for a hallowed intercourse with the Father of their spirits, in the deepest seclusion. Now this reserve, this avoidance of all public display in regard to their religious concerns, will very naturally appear, to those who differ from them in this respect, a proof of coldness and indifference: while, in truth, these circumstances, according to well established principles, are proofs of precisely the reverse. Deep emotion is never forward and garrulous; and the religion of Christ, in this, as in all things else, recognises and proceeds upon the great laws of the human mind.

Another circumstance, which, doubtless, in the opinion of many, has given an appearance of coldness to our views of Christianity, is, that *they do not favor sudden and extravagant emotions of any sort.* We believe that the religious character, like everything else which is of any very great value, is formed by degrees. We do not, it is confessed, make much account of great and sudden and overwhelming fears and agonies, nor of great and sudden and overwhelming joys and transports. We believe that a true religious character has its origin, commonly, in a sober conviction of the understanding, and not in mere feeling; that its perfection, the only perfection of which it is capable on earth, consists in a continual advancement, and not in a sinless and impeccable state of holiness. We believe it is a deplorable mistake in any man, to think he can precisely mark the hour or moment when he was a sinner, and the succeeding hour or moment when he became a saint. And because we

cannot point out in the chart of our earthly course the precise spot, where we escaped the shoals and quicksands of moral perdition, or relate the blank despair of seeing them in our way, or our ecstasy of joy at passing them in safety, we are thought by some Christians to be indifferent to the whole subject; we cannot but think that the inference is as unauthorized as it certainly is unkind.

Another circumstance which comes in aid of the same result, to which I can only allude in passing, is *our estimate of the results, of the fruits, of true religion.* These we believe to be tranquillity of mind, peace of conscience, humble yet abiding hope, and uniform serenity and cheerfulness. We think that when Christianity, in a former age, was hooded in the cowl, shut up in the cloister, and made the dispenser of uncommanded mortifications and penances, her very nature was outraged. We think that when, in later times, she is made the patroness of sighs and tears, clad in sackcloth and in ashes, brought into society to lay a palsying touch upon all innocent enjoyments, to spread a gloom over human faces, to give a sepulchral tone to human voices, and to send a chill through human hearts, her very nature is also outraged, as much as it was in the dark ages of superstition and monkery. And if viewing our religion as the daughter of infinite love, sent into the world on a message of peace and good will to men, as the guide and only safe guide to happiness here and hereafter; — if this be to regard her with coldness and indifference; we must admit the charge, and hope always to be justly liable to its full import.

I observe, in conclusion of this topic, that *our views of the nature of man and of the terms of salvation,* compared with more prevalent and popular doctrines,

are such as must necessarily modify the exercise and expression of our zeal. We cannot believe, for instance, that men come into this life under the blasting curse of their Creator, that they are his enemies, not, as the apostle expresses it, 'by wicked works,' but from the simple fact of being born into this fallen and lost world. We cannot believe, that from this state of utter alienation none can be rescued, but by a reception of our peculiar form of belief, and by passing through a certain extraordinary process therein prescribed. Did we believe this: did we consider ourselves thus the selected champions of God's cause on earth; did we regard ourselves as the exclusive possessors of saving truth, the appointed guardians of that tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations; did we believe that our own peculiar and distinctive creed is the only channel through which God's mercy flows to the children of men; did we think that we alone can stand as deliverers between the dead and the living; that we alone, of all mortal men, are commissioned to station ourselves on the brink of the pit of despair, where almighty wrath is represented as taking its dreadful reprisals for sin, to stay the multitude who are recklessly plunging in; did we believe this, then ought we to be zealous indeed, in the all-important work committed to our care, zealous to the last degree, — so zealous as to think nothing accomplished, while anything remained to be done.

But we do not and cannot make any such exclusive pretensions. We do not and cannot believe, that God has confined his mercy to those who receive our form of christian faith. We do not and cannot believe, that the unconscious infant, the benighted heathen, or any others, on whom the gospel light has never shone, are to perish

everlastingly for lack of that, which, in the providence of our common Father, it was never in their power to obtain. At the same time, be it distinctly noted, we value our views of christian truth above all things else. We believe them to be the most consoling, the most sustaining, the most delightful, the most elevating, the most sanctifying truths, which the mind of man can receive. We believe them fitted, infinitely better fitted than any other, to meet the moral necessities of men, and to exalt and perfect our natures. We know of nothing to be put in comparison with them. We wish they could be disseminated throughout the world. We earnestly desire and pray that they may possess and influence every heart. We are, or we ought to be, willing to do, to suffer, and if need be, to die for them. But we do not believe that they are the only passport to God's mercy-seat, to forgiveness and salvation. We believe, on the contrary, that he is the common Father of all; that he is leading us to himself by ten thousand ways; that all will be judged, not according to the dogmas of our or any other creed, but according to the light which is imparted to them, and to their sincere endeavors to learn and to do his will; that, in a word, to adopt the explicit language of the apostle 'all, in every nation, that fear God and work righteousness, will be accepted of him.' Holding these sentiments, it is obvious that we cannot be actuated by the same kind and degree of zeal which influences those, to whose belief, faithfulness to the subject has obliged me, though with no unfriendly feelings towards them, to advert.

I have thus mentioned, in detail, some of those circumstances which may have combined to give an appearance of coldness to our views of christian faith; while, in truth and in reality, they are justly liable to no such charge

This, I trust, will appear yet more plainly, when, in the last place, I refer to some traits in our peculiar views of christian truth, which are totally inconsistent with the imputation of a want of warmth and energy to excite and move the heart. On this part of the subject, fertile as it is, I can, within the limits by which I wish to confine myself, do little more than gather into a summary a few leading points, each of which would require a treatise for its full development.

And first, as being the most important in disproving the charge that our system is cold and heartless, I refer you to *the views we take of the character of God.* We regard him not only as the Creator and Ruler of all things, but as the universal Father and Friend of man; as one, who though clothed in majesty and might beyond all thought and conception, still condescends to regard us as his children, and to give us access to him by a filial right. We believe that God is love, that all his dispensations have their origin, and will have their end in love, eternal, unchangeable, ineffable love. Words fail us when we speak of this. The parental relation, even as it exists among mortals, implies that which mortal language cannot utter; and well, then, may it falter and fail in expressing the parental love of our Father in Heaven. We may gain, indeed, some intimations of the *nature* of his parental love, from the emotions of our own bosoms, but they fall as far beneath the great reality, as the earth is beneath the heavens, and are as different in degree as finite is from infinite. And can a system of faith, which regards this as a leading, a primal doctrine, be considered cold and heartless?

In further disproof of the charge that our system is wanting in warmth and energy, I might insist upon the

fact, that *it is one which we can understand.* It appeals to the *minds* of men. We think this of great importance. For, though a mystical and incomprehensible faith may fill the mind with a painful misgiving and despondency, on the principle that what is dark and mysterious is among the elementary principles of terror; yet, the only valuable impressions, that can be made upon the heart, must proceed from what is addressed to our perceptions as rational beings. Passion flows and ebbs. Emotions are as changeful as the hues of clouds. Feeling varies with all the influences to which we are subjected. The only solid basis of a solid character is thought, reflection, conviction. The very circumstance, then, that our religious views are capable of being understood, that they consider revelation as revealing something, and something which men can know and can do, is better adapted to call forth a really valuable zeal, and interest our better affections, and excite us to virtue and holiness, than all mysteries however vague, or dark, or terrific.

I might insist too, in substantiating the same fact, that *our system of faith is eminently and peculiarly practical.* It everywhere enjoins duty as the end of doctrine, morality as the end of religious faith. It inculcates a universal holiness of heart and life, and makes the formation of a character for heaven the great object of existence on earth. It does not reveal to us any scheme by which we can be freed from the effects of our own conduct; it does not teach that our final acceptance depends upon the merit or demerit of any other person being imputed to us, or that we are to wait in a state of passive expectancy, until something is done in us and for us, which we, of ourselves, can do nothing to obtain; but, on the contrary, that we are acting, in every moment of our conscious existence, in

reference to an impartial tribunal; that God's eye is ever upon us, and that all that is worthy of hope or fear depends upon our own personal endeavors, assisted by the promised aid of God's spirit. It assures us, moreover, that earnest, honest, persevering effort cannot fail. To try is to succeed. To toil is to reap. To struggle is to conquer. To contend is to win. To seek is to find. No good effort is lost. It carries with it, nay it *is* its own reward. It does something to improve the character; and improvement of character is happiness, happiness here and happiness hereafter. How very serious is this view of human duty! What can call forth human effort, if this do not; and how full, at the same time, it is of encouragement and hope!

I might pursue the same train of remark in regard to other leading truths in our system of faith. The august mission of Jesus Christ, his spotless character, its sublimity, its tenderness, its official greatness, its human sympathy, and all the gracious influences of his instructions, life, death and resurrection; the doctrines of the immortality of the human soul; of a future state of retribution; of the promised aid of the holy spirit; are all themes of the most intense and solemn interest. I might show that our system meets all the moral wants of men, that it has light for every darkened mind, and a balm for every wounded heart.

But I must pass by these subjects with only this brief allusion to them; and shall advert, in conclusion, to one other trait in our religious belief, which, to my mind, is fraught with life-inspiring energy; and is of itself sufficient to redeem any system from the imputation of being cold and ineffectual. I refer to *the belief we entertain of the progressive nature of christian attainments.* We

think that, in this respect, our views are admirably adapted to that crowning distinction of the human soul, its capacity of indefinite improvement. This, more than any thing else, distinguishes man from all other beings on earth. The gradual advancement of the human mind from its first gropings after light in infancy, to that surpassing energy, which emulates the knowledge of superior natures, is an obvious illustration of this. The same is true of our moral capacities. 'No man knows what he can do, until he earnestly endeavors to do what he can; and whoever thus earnestly strives to excel, will often find reason to be astonished at his own success.' His moral like his intellectual powers will gain strength by exertion; one conquest will lead on to another; faculties, of which he was before unconscious, will be brought to light. The career of duty is not circumscribed by a narrow circle, in which we must ever tread on in one unvaried round, but is rather to be likened to a continually ascending scale, in which every effort gives an impulse to a higher effort; in which new vigor is derived from every new attainment, and every instance of success is the parent of success. This is universally true of all human exertion. All men who have gotten in advance of their species in the career of earthly excellence, have ever placed before them the immense, the infinite of perfection; a model, which unfolds a new attractiveness the nearer it is approached, an object which advances as they pursue, and leads them further onward the further they go. The higher they ascend, the wider the field of duty opens to their view; every difficulty surmounted gives new animation and energy for new trials. This we believe to be peculiarly true of christian effort. Yes, the course of virtue is ever onward and upward. It

may be begun in humiliation, in tears, in confession, in penitence: it leads on through the active and passive virtues of our condition in life; it mounts from one attainment to another; from light to light; from grace to grace; from hope to hope; from strength to strength; and aspires at last to the holiness and happiness of sainted perfection. And if such be our capacity of religious improvement on earth, with all the downward influences of passion, infirmity and sin; what may we not anticipate from that future world, where what is 'sown in weakness shall be raised in power;' where what has 'borne the image of the earthy, shall bear the image of the heavenly;' where, with continually enlarging and improving capacities, we shall approach nearer the Infinite Source of all truth and love: and where nothing shall limit our progress, but the throne of the Eternal One?

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THE DOCTRINE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

By SAMUEL BARRETT.

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RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

Experience worketh hope, and this hope maketh not ashamed. — PAUL.

THE subject I purpose to consider in these pages is religious experience. I design to offer some plain remarks on the importance, misapprehensions, characteristics, and methods of experimental religion. A discourse embracing topics such as these, cannot be deemed unworthy the attention of any who profess to be disciples of Jesus Christ; since it will be readily conceded, that the great end of his divine mission was to make men experimentally acquainted with what religion unfolds and enjoins; and since, as every one must acknowledge, there is no point upon which Christians, of whatever denomination, ought to find a higher degree of satisfaction in dwelling, than the practical tendencies of their faith.

I. In asking attention, in the first place, to the *importance* of experimental religion, I begin with expressing the hope that, if, in any mind attached to liberal views of Christianity, unpleasant thoughts are apt to be associated with the topic in consequence of the extremes to which some have been forced in seasons of unusual

excitement, they will not be set to the account of religious experience, properly understood, but to that only of the extravagances which have at times accompanied it. The thing itself, apart from its abuses and viewed in its true light and relations, can appear to none more worthy of deepest concern, than it ought to the class of Christians to which we belong. Indeed, not to attach infinite importance to the religion that is truly experimental, would be inconsistent with our declared, nay, with our most cherished principles. Much as we admire our system of faith, in a speculative regard, we know and we teach, that it must be in vain for us unless we make it a matter of individual, personal experience. Were it not for its power to enlighten, sanctify, and save the soul, we should account it as a useless thing. For this power, unequalled as we think it, we esteem our faith above all price; for this we cling to it as to our life; for this we would not shrink from any sacrifice to uphold it in the world. Indeed, there is not, I am persuaded, nor ever has been, any system, which, alike as to what it denies of the popular creed, as to what it affirms to be of revealed truth, and as to what belongs to it in common with the notices we are compelled to take of human life and divine providence, is so well adapted, as Unitarian Christianity, to commend the importance of the religion that is thoroughly experimental; since, as I sincerely believe, there is, and there has been, none, which so uniformly, so decidedly, and so strongly, as this, asserts its claim and evinces its power, to deepen the sense of individual responsibleness, to enforce the obligation of personal endeavor, and to press home the great truth that no man's hopes ought, in a religious respect, to be better than his experiences.

1. First, can anything be better suited to this end than

what our system denies of the popular creed? Why, but for the importance we attach to experimental religion, do we deem it worthy of so much effort to be rid of those false grounds of hope, that have for ages prevented the doctrines of Jesus from bearing upon men's consciences with the pressure of unquestionable truth? Why else, for instance, do we plead no hereditary impotency as an excuse for our sins; hold to no transfer of the penalty of our guilt to a substituted victim; trust in no righteousness as imputable to us but our own; cherish no hope of special help from heaven except we try to help ourselves; rely on no faith without works; recognise no condition of salvation but personal holiness; depend on nothing for acceptance with God but our own character and the mercy of our heavenly Father as made known to us by his blessed Son?

2. Again, can anything more strongly evince the importance of experimental religion, than what our system affirms to be of divine revelation? Why, but for our deep sense of this, do we lay so much stress on those truths of Scripture, which are practical; which imply the obligations, suggest the motives, and prescribe the rules of duty; which, in a word, require of us the greatest amount of virtue? Why for example, do we prize so highly the belief that we were born with pure hearts, but that we may feel ourselves bound to keep the treasure unsullied; the belief that we have the power, moral as well as physical, to do our duty, but that we may not wait for supernatural influence before we set about it; the belief that God's love to his children is free, unmerited, and unbought, but that it may touch our hearts and win us to an affectionate obedience; the belief that Jesus Christ was sent by the Father to save us, by affording

us methods and motives for saving ourselves, but that we may have no reason or apology for not yielding to the one and using the other; the belief that there is the most intimate and enduring connexion between vice and misery, and between virtue and happiness, but that we may dread sin as our worst enemy, and cherish desires of holiness that nothing can quench?

3. Then, too, the notices we are compelled to take of human life and divine providence, at once fall in with these views, and serve to deepen our impression of the importance that belongs to experimental religion. We interpret everything as a caution against trusting to what are called death-bed experiences. According to our views, the experiment is every day going on that is to decide our future destiny. Its results are unaffected by nothing that happens to us. We are continually growing better or worse. Our character is modified by every step we take, by every thought we think, by every feeling we cherish, by all our movements, speculations, and emotions. Moment presses upon moment, day upon day, and year upon year, but no one of them leaves us as it found us. We propitiate it in the appointed way, and it imparts to us its blessing; we do it despite in our folly, and it marks us with its curse. We use it well as it passes, and it goes to bear witness for us at the bar of God. We stain it with our vice, it leaves us, and we cannot call it back again to take the stain out. The cry of penitence will not revoke the time we have lost. No tears of contrition can change the pollution of guilt into the purity of innocence. Prayer to God even, after we have sinned, though it may obtain all which forgiveness implies, cannot make us as we were before we transgressed. What we experience and what we do is fixed on the

page of truth. The record of our virtues will be as lasting as our memory, and it will not cease to be a satisfaction to us such as angels have. But the leaf in the book of our life that we have purposely blotted we cannot make clean again. The blot must remain to fill us with regrets whenever we look upon it.

With what interest, therefore, should not our experiences seem to us clothed. I cannot find language to express it fully. I must leave it to imagination to conceive what I am unable to describe. If we are to live forever, and if all we deliberately think and feel and do, is to have a bearing on our future condition indefinitely, then, certainly, the subject is one of vast, one of inexpressible importance.

II. But I must venture to caution my readers against some *misapprehensions* that prevail. The subject is not fully understood by all who admit its importance. The words, religious experience, are often pronounced, I suspect, without any clear conceptions of their true meaning. Religious experience itself, is frequently judged of by a wrong standard, and specimens of it have not seldom been selected for imitation, which by no means deserved such distinction. Indeed, if I do not greatly err, there are more mistakes prevalent in some portions of the community, as to the operations and signs of experimental religion, than in regard to almost any other topic. It may not be useless to dwell for a time upon some of them.

1. In the first place, then, I have known persons, thought by themselves and by their friends to be the subjects of experimental religion, whose dispositions and pursuits would hardly have been different from what they were, if the sense of God's being and presence had

been quenched in their minds, and the future world had been to them as a mere nonentity. I have seen them, surrounded by ease and prosperity, and honored in the elegant exchange of the courtesies of society, pass through life in a sort of decent indifference to divine things, and drop at last into their graves with scarce any more *vital* religion than the animals had, that were perishing around them. And yet these persons dreamt of having experienced religion, because they professed it, and attended to its forms, and talked about it, and recommended it to their children.

2. In the next place, I cannot overlook an error, the opposite to this, and one that has prevailed more than most others in some parts of our land, giving birth to all the disgustful forms of fanaticism, and securing to coarse and violent men an unrighteous and fearful power over uniformed and timid minds. I allude to the false notion that true experimental religion is a feverish excitement, a paroxysm of passion, which must be produced by extraordinary influences, and which must be sustained by all possible abstractions from the accustomed pursuits and pleasures of society. Let me not be misunderstood, however. God forbid, that any one should infer from my noticing this error in such terms, that I am the advocate of coldness in religion. I allow, nay, I insist upon it, that no subject should awaken the energies of the soul like christian truth. The only point to which I speak, is the mistake, that there can be no genuine religious experience without excessive heat and agitation; a mistake, which is not a rare one, and which is the cause that many of the best disciples of Jesus are looked upon with suspicion. I only refer to the fact, that there *are* ecstacies which are merely animal, depending on the state of

the nervous system, and not always, nor indeed often, the true indices of character; that they are frequently found in persons of very little fixed religious principle, but of irritable tempers; and that they are experiences not only to be deprecated in all, but such as many most excellent individuals have been, from the very constitution of their minds, the extent of their knowledge. and the admirable discipline of their passions, utterly incapable of undergoing.

3. A third error, that deserves to be noticed, is the idea that religious experience, to be genuine, must be connected with only one set of religious opinions. It is not in my mind to affirm, that one's experiences are not at all affected by his opinions. I believe the contrary. I believe that our religious exercises are very much modified by the doctrines we hold to be true. And I would urge this fact as a motive to careful investigation, and as a caution against cherishing any opinions that have a hurtful tendency. Were I to descend to particulars in this connexion, I would say, Beware of the belief that you were born with entire depravity of heart, lest it lead you to charge your sins to your constitution, or your Creator. Beware of the doctrine of moral inability, from the fear that being persuaded you can do nothing, you conclude you have nothing to do. Beware of the system that inculcates vicarious satisfaction and substituted righteousness, lest you be tempted to rely on foreign aid for what alone can be done by yourselves. Beware of false views of special grace, lest by waiting for miraculous influence you put yourselves out of the way of experiencing religion at all. Beware of the prevalent notion about the efficacy of a late repentance, for it may be, there is no way of instantaneous regeneration from the confine of a sinful life to the gates of heaven.

These opinions, and such as these, one would suppose must be unfriendly to practical religion, if any opinions can be so. Yet how many persons who hold them, have we not seen to be excellent Christians. And what should the fact teach us? What but that light is light, through whatever medium it struggles? that the gold is not annihilated by its alloy? that the gospel *may* effect its chief purposes though connected with much which does not belong to it? What, in a word, but that it is a mistake to suppose that genuine religious experiences are associated with only one class of opinions? Indeed, is there a sect in Christendom that cannot boast of its saints? There is, I am persuaded, enough of truth in the creed of every christian denomination to sanctify and save the soul, only let that truth have its perfect work. Suppose that you could not assent in all its details, to the formulary of faith adopted by any of the contending parties. Could you not, for all that, experience religion? Could you not feel that God is wise and good, and that you owe him your love and obedience? Could you not be sensible of your sins and repent of and forsake them? Could you not receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and possess yourselves of his spirit, and endeavor to tread in his footsteps? Could you not be persuaded, and act from the persuasion, that your Creator and Judge has so constituted the moral world that misery shall follow sin, and happiness shall flow from holiness? Well, this, and such as this, is religious experience; and it is what may be found in every sect of Christians. It is, therefore, wrong to say that religious experience is necessarily connected only with the peculiar tenets of some one class of christian professors.

4. Another error relating to the subject is, that true religious experiences consist of the same exercises in all thorough converts. There is, we all know, a certain defined process prescribed in some books and sanctioned by some churches, through which every one, of whatever character, is required to pass before he can be recognised as having experienced religion satisfactorily. There are the same convictions for all, whether they have sinned little or much, and there are the same agonies, and then the same raptures. That this, however, cannot be correct, seems to be obvious. It is impossible in the nature of things for all persons to have precisely the same experiences, for all have not been alike vicious; all do not need equal reformation; all are not susceptible of the same impressions; all are not placed in similar situations; all have not the same opportunities nor the same motives. Now, in view of such diversities, which I think I may take it for granted no one will deny to exist, who will say that all must, nay, that all *can* have the same experiences? And who that knows any thing of the subject, as he ought to know it, will have it in his heart to condemn his neighbor, as unworthy of his christian fellowship, for not having gone through the full course of his own spiritual exercises? Different individuals may be equally good Christians, and yet their experiences may have been as unlike as their persons. One may not be able to recollect the time when he did not love God and man, and aim to do his duty. Another may remember distinctly when he first began to give his thoughts to divine things. Such being of necessity the case, it is evidently a mistake to suppose that religious experiences must be the same in all true Christians.

5. One other error, which has been very fruit ul of evil, is that of those who seem to think and speak and act as if to have *once* in their life undergone a change, to have once passed throngh the process of regeneration, constitutes an unquestionable passport to heaven. Persons of this description are not unfrequently to be met with. They are sure they have been born again, and this conviction, if not the whole of their experience, is that on which they chiefly rely, as the evidence of their final acceptance with God. Now, I do not say that some may not at certain seasons have felt the power of religion in a very peculiar manner. Nor would I speak contemptuously of those extraordinary emotions, to which such as have enjoyed them, delight to recur. But that the sensations of any one time, however peculiar they may have been, should be all, or the great part, of the ground of the Christian's hope, seems to me to be not only an error, but a very dangerous one. And it is so, among other reasons, because the feeling of security and confidence, which it produces, blinds one to the necessity of continual circumspection in subsequent life, and thus the chief motive of future exertion is taken away. The true doctrine, relative to religious experiences, in this respect, is, that we should be content with none that are past, but should be perpetually seeking for new and better ones. The well disciplined Christian has religious experiences every day ; and it is from a patient continuance in them, and from this alone, under God, that he derives the hope of inheriting the promises made to the faithful.

But it must be painful to my readers, certainly it is so to me, to dwell upon the misapprehensions of our fellow men in respect to so sacred a subject, as that which is before

us. I therefore pass by unnoticed some others, that occur to me as very common, though less injurious than those I have mentioned, and ask your attention, while I attempt to state to you, at considerable length, what I deem to be that genuine religious experience, which, as the Apostle says, and as Unitarians believe, produces the hope that will not disappoint us.

III. What, then, is genuine religious experience? its nature? its *characteristics*? I may partly answer the question, by asking another. What is genuine experience in respect to other subjects? What is literary experience? What is agricultural experience? What is mercantile experience? To these questions there is no difficult answer. Every one knows that, by experience, when the term is used in these connexions, is meant, the result of the practical application of principles appropriate to these connexions. Or it means the knowledge, skill, devotedness, and satisfaction, derived from reducing what belongs to the theory of these different sorts of business to practice. Now, precisely the same kind of answer is to be given to the question, what is religious experience. Religious experience is the result of the practical application of religious principles, or, it is the knowledge, skill, devotedness, and satisfaction, derived from reducing what belongs to the theory of religion to practice. Accordingly, we may be said to experience religion just in proportion as, by employing our thoughts upon it, our minds are enlightened and ennobled; as, by setting our affections upon it, our hearts are interested and sanctified; and as, by acting from it, our habits of life become holier and stronger. Or, to express the same thing in fewer words,—religious experience is the fruit of the principles of religion faithfully applied to

the mind, the heart, and the life. To be complete and satisfactory, it must have these three relations. If it fails in respect to either, it is so far defective, and lessens proportionably the grounds of christian hope. Let us dwell a little on religious experience in the three relations I have mentioned.

1. I have said that religious experience is the fruit of the principles of religion faithfully applied to the mind. It is what the understanding, the reason, all the intellectual faculties, are concerned with. Indeed, here is the source of the religion of the heart and life. Without knowledge, there could not be any religious experience. But I wish to confine myself now to the effects of religion on the mind alone. I would have it understood, that in embracing Unitarianism, we do not burden ourselves with a cumbersome apparatus, which perplexes and retards, instead of facilitating, the operations of intellect. Revelation, as we view it, was not designed to limit reason, but to call it into new and better exercises. Our system is suited, above all others, we think, to develope, strengthen, and ennoble the mental faculties. Till it does this, we say its work is not accomplished. I cannot insist upon this efficacy of God's truth on the mind too strongly. I fear it is not duly estimated. Religion has been placed too much in creeds and too little in thought. It has served to darken and belittle the soul, when it should have illumined and enlarged it. God gave it to make the mind free and strong; but man, in his ignorance or his folly, has forged fetters out of it, by which the mind has been cramped and made impotent as a child's. Let it be so no more. Let not the whole mental existence be shrunk and shrivelled into the dimensions of a party system, tolerable only in times long since

gone by. Do not think, in your manhood, to wear the swaddling bands of your infancy. Assert, and enjoy, that liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.

There *is* a freedom of thought, an enlargement of view, an elevation of soul, a perpetual putting forth of its faculties upward and onward, towards God and heaven, which nothing gives but a pure religion, and which we cannot value too highly. Yes, and the mind that has been brought to this state of activity and lofty aspiration, is as much superior to common minds, in respect to all that truly exalts human nature, as the most cultivated intellect in civilized society is to that of the rudest savage of the forest. I do not know of a better word to express the immediate cause of this sort of mental experience, than the old scriptural word, *faith*—an enlightened faith in the divine perfections and purposes, as revealed by Jesus Christ. I use the term, however, in no restricted sense. I mean not by it, a mere belief in this or that doctrine, which the contending sects make the topic of unceasing controversy. But I mean by it, that all-comprehending principle, call it a sentiment, or a conviction, or what you will, which implies confidence and trust in the power, wisdom, and goodness of Almighty God; which preserves the faculties open to the light of the divine communications, through whatever medium they may come; which keeps up a strong and steady current of thought towards the Infinite and Eternal; which gives to the words of Jesus an authority that belongs to the teaching of none other than a divinely commissioned messenger from the Universal Father; which is constantly arming conscience with new power, and enduing the soul with fortitude to bear up under any trial, and giving courage to tread down temptation in the

way of duty, and insuring the ready consecration of every faculty to the known requisitions of God's will.

Such I conceive to be genuine religious experience, in respect to the human mind. This is what, as Unitarian Christians, we should aspire to. We are not to rest satisfied, till it invests the thought of God with absolute power over every other thought; till it makes the future predominate habitually over the present; till it clothes the knowledge imparted by the Saviour with an importance, which no other knowledge possesses; till it renders nature, providence, and scripture, continually tributary to the treasures of our wisdom; till it gives every day new impressions of the dignity of our nature, and higher views of its capacity for improvement; till it seems, indeed, to create new faculties within us; till it enables us to look upon the divine works with an eye that shall discern fresh beauties at every successive glance; till, in a word, it reveals to us God in everything good, and everything good in God.

2. I have said that religious experience is the fruit of the principles of religion faithfully applied to the heart. Unitarianism is by no means a system adapted only to the intellect. We are not the philosophical pupils of a master who asks for the service of the mind alone. Ours is a religion in which the affections are concerned. Though our experiences do have their source in knowledge, and must be always guided by reason, yet they are not to be marked with coldness. We hold that the man, whose religious exercises are confined to the frigid region of his understanding, has taken but some of the first steps in the christian course. 'Give me thine heart,' is the divine injunction; and this, we know, we must give, or our experience worketh not the hope of the gos-

pel. Feeling is as important as conviction. Affection is as essential to true piety as it is to true friendship. Who would take from this its glow? But you might as well do it, as deprive religion of its warmth, by restricting it to the cold province of the understanding. Mistake me not, however. The danger of insensibility is not all on the side of the intellect. The affections, in religion, as in everything else, may suffer from the meaner propensities They often do so in what are called revivals. There are artificial excitements, there are impressions on the senses, not on the soul, which exhilarate the system for a time, and then bring on torpor and spiritual death. This we must guard against as for our life. The spirit that was created to attach itself to God and goodness, with a pure, steady, unconquerable love, must not disappear in carnal absorption; must not subside into the mere physical nature; must not sink and sleep in the animal functions; must not be rocked and lulled into lethargy by the bodily movements. It must ever be a living, active, holy spirit, full of love for its Creator and its duty.

Divine truth never accomplishes its full purpose, where it does not both awaken and cherish a devout and generous sensibility. Did God reveal himself to us, do you think, in the affecting character of a tender Father, only to produce a conviction in our mind? Did the blessed Jesus speak and die, as never man spake and died, only that his words and example might be deposited in our memory? Is the curtain raised for us that shut out from the view of former generations the world of spirits, merely that we might have new subjects of speculation? Oh! no. The truths of our religion were designed to touch the deep springs of human nature; and these are in the heart. They were wisely so designed, be

cause they are to rule in a soul, that is agitated by various passions; which, if not governed by something stronger than themselves, will put to hazard its virtue and its peace. Now to experience religion thoroughly, is to give it complete control over these dangerous propensities of our nature. I do not mean that the passions are to be extinguished; but that they are to be so chastened down and so directed, as that they shall be habitually on the side of God and duty; performing their appropriate office calmly and steadily indeed, yet with energy; preserving an easy susceptibility of soul to everything that comes from and relates to the source of all good; having ready sympathy with all that is pure and excellent in human beings, into whatever name they may have been baptised; and urging the whole man onward to new and still greater attainments.

Such I understand religious experience to be, as it relates to the heart. As Unitarians, we are not to be content with what our religion does for us, unless it quickens, controls, and sanctifies the affections; unless it subdues the inordinate love of the world by kindling up a nobler love within us; unless it creates a dread of sin, stronger, ay, stronger, than the dread of death; unless it awakens desires after holiness as intense as the desire of life; unless it directs the full force of the affections to high and worthy objects; to God, to Christ, to holiness, to heaven.

3. I have said that religious experience is the fruit of the principles of religion faithfully applied to the life. No convictions, no feelings, are enough without this. Unitarianism is eminently a practical religion. We believe, that he who *doeth* righteousness, and he alone, is truly righteous. We hold, that the perfection of christian experience is the actual consecration of the thoughts

and affections to God, in that way of well doing, to which the finger of God, in his providence, every day points. We have not perfect sympathy with any who confine their religion to particular seasons and localities. We say it is of little worth, unless it accompanies men into their ordinary pursuits, and causes its influence to be felt in the diversities of innocent and useful occupation. Religion and business, we maintain, are not separate interests. The duties of the Christian are not distinct from the duties of the man. The narrow way to heaven runs directly through the busy scenes of the world. The substance of religious service is moral service. The moral man is the only thoroughly experienced Christian.

From this it will doubtless be inferred, that I regard much which passes in the world for religion as false. And certainly I wish it to be so inferred. There is a religion of places, which I call local religion. There is a religion of times, which I term periodical religion. There is a religion of ordinances, which I name ritual religion. There is a religion of passion, which I denominate feverish religion. There is, too, a verbal religion, a party religion, a controversial religion, a sensual religion. But what is it all worth, if it be no more than this? What is it all worth, if it does not improve the life? Believe me, true religion is never divorced from true morality. As much as we have of this, we have of that, and no more. They cannot exist separately. The value of our experiences is to be estimated, not by the devotions of the Sunday, but by the doings of the week; not by what we seem to be at church, but by what we are at home, and in the places of our traffic. Our religion, if genuine, will go with us wherever we go, and dwell with us wherever we dwell, drawing us

into closer intimacy with our God, multiplying and strengthening the ties that bind us to the wise and good among men, and preserving us unspotted from the world. Christianity seeks to commend and dignify the common pursuits of men, not to disparage them. It is into the domestic, social, and business character, that it was designed to carry its purifying, controlling, and ennobling power. Indeed, it is upon the broad altar of society that our most acceptable sacrifice is offered up to the universal Father. Those prayers are best received above which ascend from men, whose hearts are pledged and whose hands are consecrated to the good of their fellows.

Thus, our religion is social and practical; social and practical, both in its nature and its effects. Of this character must be our experiences, if we would have the hope that 'maketh not ashamed.' We expect to be saved, not by being drawn by our faith from our appropriate offices in the ordinary pursuits of society, but by being sanctified by it in the very act of fulfilling them. Therefore it is, that Unitarianism is never heard bidding the domestic to leave her employment in order to enjoy her religious impressions, or the mechanic to sit down in indolent musings because he has become pious, or the merchant to forsake his business that he may nurse his experiences. Oh no. We would, indeed, persuade all to renounce the world, with respect to its false principles, its vicious spirit, and its harmful pleasures. But we would persuade all, at the same time, to regard the world, while they live in it, as the place of their noblest christian achievements; as the scene arranged by Providence, for activity, for trial, and for the perfecting of the character. There, is the post assigned to every man by his Creator. It were cowardly, not to say unchristian, to forsake it.

Am I told, by way of objection, that it is difficult to maintain it amid the world's exposures ? I know it is so. But I know as well that it is more difficult to be a thorough Christian in solitude. Unitarianism does not profess to remove all difficulties from our path, though it does enable us to surmount them. It is not indeed the easy way of faith without works, of devotion without virtue, of feeling without practical effort; and I thank God that it is not. Difficulty is appointed to man in great kindness. Our character would be weak and puny, if we had nothing to struggle with and overcome. What is the plant that grows up in the shade ? What is the mountain oak that has wrestled with the storm ? Even Jesus Christ had difficulty to encounter, and this too at every step of his progress. But who will say that he did not reap benefit from it ? The Scriptures tell us, that he was 'made perfect through suffering.' And then, too, his reward was the greater for it. It was 'for enduring the cross and despising its shame,' say the same Scriptures, that he was exalted at the right hand of God. To the Author and Finisher of our faith we are to look for a pattern. God has placed us in this world of virtuous men and of vicious men, this world of toil and temptation, this world of difficulty and sorrow, not that we should escape from its trials and its duties; but that we should be in the midst of them, bearing ourselves manfully and religiously, and perfecting holiness, in his fear, by combating and vanquishing the evils of our lot. Yes, it is in the world, in the diversified relations of life, in the daily pressure of multiplied pursuits, whether at home or abroad, in the shop or in the field, in the office or in the mart, that the reality of our religious experiences must appear; and if it appears not there, it is in vain that it does so here.

He that is not a Christian in his common, every day dependences and avocations, is not a Christian at all. A man who is a tyrant in his family, or a knave in the place of his business, or immoral anywhere, may *talk* of his experiences, if he please;—but, let me tell him, they have, in the sight of the omniscient God, no more desert than the breathings of the winds, or the playings of the sunbeams. Look then, to your life, Christians. Here is the true test of the genuineness of your experiences. Other evidences may deceive you; this never can. Others may be misunderstood; this bears signatures intelligible to men and angels.

IV. Thus, I have answered, as I was able, the question, what is religious experience? We perceive there is no mystery about it. It is a plain, practical matter, to which every one is competent, who will apply the principles of God's revelations according to the *methods* of his appointment. What are these methods?

1. I take it upon myself to say, first, it is his appointment, that we aim to make the thought, that we are *able* to apply these principles so as to become the subjects of experimental religion, one of our most familiar thoughts. And I say this, because every page of his holy word addresses us as free agents, capable of moral obedience, responsible to him for our actions, and destined to reward or punishment according to our doings and character. Has God, then, given us the ability, and thus made it our duty, to experience religion? Let us not hesitate to think that we can experience it. Here is the beginning of every great achievement. That this is true in business, every one knows. It is true in religion. He who *imagines* himself impotent, will be likely to be impotent in fact. Form no low estimate of the power which your

Maker has given you. It is ingratitude to the Giver to despise his gifts. It paralyzes effort to fancy that little or nothing can be done. Think that you can do much, and you will attempt much. I have small hope of him who is always brooding over what he calls the worthlessness of human nature. I have great hope of him, who, while he thinks and speaks modestly of his attainments, believes he has faculties given him by God for noble acquisitions.

2. In the next place, believing that we can experience religion, we are to regard it as God's appointment, that we give *attention* to the subject. Nothing of course is to be expected without this. Religious acquisitions are subject to the same law with other acquisitions. They demand that we apply our minds to serious, intense, and prolonged consideration of religious topics. We may find the task a difficult one at first. What then? Do we not know that this is the case with almost all new subjects? Have we not found the same to happen in our worldly concerns? Yet, by strenuous and repeated effort, have we not found the repugnance to grow less and less, till at length we came to be pleased with what before was irksome? And so it is in spiritual concerns. Let it be, that religion has little attraction for us at first. This is not a sufficient reason for abandoning it. We should rather force ourselves to contemplate it; should compel our wandering thoughts to dwell upon it once and again; should remember that if we dismiss it now, because it does not suit our taste, it will certainly return at last to suit our taste still less, and perhaps to find us incapable of feeling its power and enjoying its comforts. At the same time, we may assure ourselves, that by persevering in efforts of attention, we shall infallibly gain the mastery over our reluctant

thoughts, and finally shall come to love what, in the beginning, was a subject of indifference, if not of disgust.

3. Finally, in seeking to be the subjects of experimental religion, we must consider it as God's appointment, that we use *all the means* which he has given us, adapted to fix its principles within us, and to impart its spirit to our conduct. These means are various. One of them is, to avoid as much as possible the influence of profligate associates. Another is, to have nothing to do with books that disguise impurity under the name of wit, and soften licentiousness by the coloring of fancy. A third is, to seize, amid secular pursuits, every moment we can, for serious reflections. Again, we must inquire of history for the wisdom of the wise and the examples of the good, and ask of nature and providence what they can teach us of the divine character and purposes. It is, also, to be a settled principle with us, to mingle our sympathies and devotions, as we have opportunity, with those of our fellow men in the temple of the Most High. Then, there are the holy Scriptures, which speak of the Father of all, of the Redeemer, of heaven, of hell, and of man's duty, to be read and pondered. The ordinances of the church, too, are the appointed helps to the perfection of our experiences. There is prayer, moreover, that means of wonderfu efficacy—private and domestic prayer, which we are no more to neglect than our daily food. And last, though not least, there is action—useful action, from which, God has ordained, there shall come back to the heart a quickening and sanctifying power, making that, which is the purpose and end of the affections, also the means of rendering them holier, stronger, and more efficient prompters of all the virtues.

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By SAMUEL GILMAN.

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UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY.

The propositions that I shall attempt to prove in this discourse, are these: that Unitarian Christianity, as a system of religion and morals, is free from every doctrinal extravagance, every practical excess, and every formidable difficulty with which other systems of opinion are chargeable; that it preserves the midway path between opposite, offensive, and dangerous extremes; and that, when faithfully carried into effect, its tendencies are more beneficial to the whole present and future condition of man, than those of any other system. To all these results, the entire series of arguments which I shall adduce, will, I apprehend, infallibly lead. As we pursue the main thread, however, occasion will arise, to present subordinate recommendations, to remove objections, to refute different charges, and to correct some prevalent mistakes with respect to the system under discussion.

In the first place, then, Unitarian Christianity avoids every objectionable extreme in *doctrine*. It is infinitely removed from Atheism on the one side, since the very basis of our whole system, and the fact from which it derives its name, is, that there is ONE living and true God. It is equally removed, on the other side, from Polytheism, or from any of those forms of belief, which,

as far as language has any meaning, imply the existence of two, or three, or more distinct, supreme, and independent Gods. Certain it is, that these forms of belief, whatever may have been the intention of their original framers, have been in all ages, by many of the wisest, ablest, and best men who have ever lived, understood as palpably involving the monstrous extravagance in question. I quote, as a passing instance, a proposition from the Athanasian Creed. "The Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God." As to the truth or falsehood, the absurdity or reasonableness of the proposition itself, I am not now to argue. I only say that it is an extreme, a violent extreme in the history of human opinions; just as Atheism is the opposite violent extreme; and that between these two points, at both of which reason confessedly shrinks aghast, and piety herself is bewildered, stands the foundation doctrine of Unitarian Christianity, the terms of which can never be mistaken, that there is but one Mind, one Spirit, one creating, presiding, redeeming, and sanctifying Energy involved in the being of a God.

Let us next examine our system in reference to certain kindred doctrinal extremes in a different quarter of contemplation. One of the extremes to which I allude, is *Deism*, between which and Unitarianism there is also an immeasurable distance. The Deist rejects a revelation, denies the truth of the Bible, and considers God as sitting apart from all concern in the moral creatures whom he has formed.* The Unitarian, on the contrary,

* This is not perhaps universally true. I think there are some, but very few Deists, who believe in a superintending Providence, in the efficacy of prayer, and in a future state; all of which are reflected lights, evidently caught from Christianity.

embraces a revelation with his whole heart, believes devoutly in the truth of the Bible, adores a superintending Providence, relies on the efficacy of prayer, acknowledges his immediate responsibleness to his Creator, and adopts the sanctions of a future state of retribution. But he vibrates not over to what he esteems the opposite point of the arch, viz. that revelation and reason are at variance. He rejects with abhorrence the idea, that revealed truths are not to be scrutinized with all the powers of the mind, nor any attempts made to comprehend them. On the contrary, he thinks that we ought and that we can understand revealed truths, precisely because they *are* revealed; otherwise their object would be manifestly frustrated, and the Deity would appear to be trifling with his creatures. He apprehends that on this, as on most other subjects, extremes will be seen closely to meet, and that the difference will not be found very wide between no revelation at all, and a revelation which we must not hope to comprehend. Accordingly, he *here* also preserves his safe and favorite midway path. He receives a revelation with reverence; but the language in which that revelation is couched he submits to the test of reason, for he has no other test whereto he may submit it. He disclaims, from his heart, the slanderous charge so widely and industriously circulated, of setting reason above revelation; for if he is true to his own principles, he would ever, with the greatest alacrity, subject all his mental faculties without exception, to what God, or any of his authorized messengers, has clearly spoken.

Perhaps I might not here notice the systems of *Judaism* and *Mahometanism*, were it not that we are sometimes taunted with the charge of leaning towards them, until the popular mind has been imbued with a vague notion

of its being the case, and did they not also furnish striking illustrations of my position, that Unitarianism keeps the happy line between violent and antagonist extremes. The Jewish doctrine is, that the long promised Messiah has never yet been sent; the Unitarian's belief is that he *did* appear in the person of Jesus Christ. The former represents the character of the Messiah, whoever he may be, as that of a national deliverer, a military conqueror, the possessor, in short, of resistless physical power. The latter regards his glory as official and moral, rather than personal and physical, reveres him as the spiritual sovereign of mankind, and, from the moment the age of miracles had ceased, invests his kingdom with spiritual triumphs alone. That in our views of the *nature* of the Deity we coincide and sympathize with the children of Abraham, we are not ashamed to avow. For do we not hold in our hands the Hebrew Scriptures? Shall we be ashamed of worshipping the same God whom Moses, and David, and Isaiah adored? Be it observed, too, that if our belief of the Unity of God allies us in any manner with the Jews, yet a belief in the Trinity would involve us in an alliance still less to be desired. Traces of the latter doctrine have been discovered among the religious systems of the Hindus, and in the visions of the Platonists, a sect of heathen philosophers in Egypt.

Let us next take Mahometanism. The Unitarian is so much of a Mahometan as to believe that Mahomet was either a madman, a fool, or an impostor; he believes that the Koran owes its best parts to the Christian Scriptures; he believes that Mahometanism is a religion of war; that its converts are made by the sword; that the moment it ceases to be upheld by political power, it must fall; and he rejoices as devoutly as his fellow Christians at every

new dilapidation of the Mahometan power. On the other hand, he believes that his own religion or that of Christ, is a religion of peace, and that it must prevail just in proportion as the passions are subdued, just in proportion as men love one another, and as the arts of sound reasoning, sincere persuasion and holy living are exercised and improved. But if he glories in being thus at so wide a distance from Judaism and Mahometanism, which in all that respects the character and person of Christ, occupy one quarter of the compass, he also glories in being at the same distance from what he esteems equal errors in the other. He does not, he cannot admit, that the Agent, the Messenger, the Instrument, the Son, the Messiah of God, is either that great Being himself, or equal to him, or independent of him. And his rejection of this proposition arises, not only from its violating the ordinary uses of all language, whether literal or figurative, not only from its being inconsistent with the Unity of the Godhead, not only from its incapability of being even conceived by the human mind, but also from the explicit and undoubted declarations of Jesus Christ himself, who assures us that the Father is greater than himself, and that the doctrine he delivered was not his, or did not originate in his own mind, but from him who sent him.

And here we are led to another double comparison on doctrinal points, equally favorable to the Unitarian. While he does not, on the one hand, so far contradict the professions of Jesus himself as to *deify* him, so he is equally remote, on the other hand, from embracing what is meant in the very common charge about reducing the Saviour to the level of a *mere man*. This charge implies, not only on the face of it, but in the odium it is intended to excite, that Unitarians view the Saviour as no higher a personage

than Socrates, or any human teacher—having no peculiar or mysterious connexion with the Deity—but placed in everything, except merely accidental circumstances, on a level with the other sons of Adam. The charge is as unfounded as the others. We do believe, that the Deity, in his adorable counsels, from all eternity, invested Jesus with a glory peculiarly his own; that he bestowed on him a character of inimitable perfection; that he appointed him to a destiny and a dignity of infinite and unrivalled excellence. Our opponents, when they animadvert on our views of this subject, sink out of sight the unlimited *exaltation** which Unitarians believe was conferred on Christ by his Father. Respecting the actual existence of a human nature in Christ, both parties agree. No practice is a more favorite one with Trinitarians than to say, that Jesus delivered several of his doctrines in his *human nature*; that he uttered some things as God, and some things as man. Of course, they must mean as *mere man*, in the strictest sense of the term, and is not this the very extravagance with which they would reproach us, and which I have just now, as I trust, wiped away from our escutcheon? And thus which party leaves unimpaired the real glory of the Saviour?

But what is the essential point, the real heart of the difference which separates the two parties? It is this. Unitarians believe that the Father and the Son are intimately *connected*. Trinitarians maintain that the two Beings are in some way mysteriously *identified*. They imagine that one person had at the same time a divine and a human nature. We believe that the divine nature filled the human with its unspeakable effluences. The

* God hath highly EXALTED him.—*St Paul.*

doctrine of Trinitarians is equivalent to asserting that a single object can at the same moment possess the nature of fire and water. The doctrine of Unitarians is but analogous to the assertion that the heat of fire may pervade and become intimately mingled with the water. Thus we avoid the inadmissible extreme just mentioned, with which our opponents are chargeable; and also the opposite extreme, which they so mistakenly ascribe to us, of reducing, as it were, the water to a mere mass of ice.

That you may perfectly understand our mutual opinions on this point, I will further try to explain the matter by a clear and familiar illustration. Suppose some rich, powerful and benevolent friend should make you a present of a golden cup. If the vessel contained nothing, I allow that it would be a "mere" golden cup. But suppose that your friend had filled that cup with some infinitely precious cordial, some elixir of immortal life, which you could obtain from no other quarter in existence. Would it *then* be right to say, that he had given you a *mere cup*? Now I frankly assure you, that Unitarians regard the Saviour not as a mere golden cup, nor as a mere man, but as that cup filled with the precious elixir of life; and in this point of view they gratefully receive him from the hand of God, invested with divine authority, filled with heavenly wisdom, and laden with eternal blessings to mankind. But what do our Trinitarian brethren insist upon? They say, your cup is worth nothing, and all that it contains is worth nothing, because it is not equal to the friend who gives it, and because it does not possess his nature! If this be not an unwarrantable extreme in doctrine, I know not what is; but it is certainly an extreme of which Unitarians are not guilty.

I proceed to notice another instance, wherein I think

we advance in a safe, true and right line, between two opposite but inadmissible extremes. Unitarians in general believe that the Supreme God, or the Father, communicates in various ways the happiest *influences* to the human mind. Now this is a clear, simple, powerful and delightful doctrine. But on one side of us we see a large class of men who deny that there are any influences at all communicated by the Deity to the mind; and on the other side, a large class who declare that these influences are a person, the third person of the Trinity, and not only that, but a person equal to the Father who sends him! And they bitterly condemn us, not because we deny or undervalue the influences themselves, for we allow them in all their reality, fulness, and power, but simply because we do not regard them as an eternal and separate person, and worship the influences along with the God who sends them!

Again, on the subject of the *atonement*, the Unitarian avoids injurious, revolting, and incredible doctrines. He does not believe that an Eternal Being suffered on the cross, nor that the Creator of the world expired. Even the strictest of our Orthodox brethren demur at such a naked statement, and disclaim the consequences which it involves. Yet what they mean by insisting on an infinite atonement, and at the same time denying the sufferings and death of an infinite being, surpasses our powers of comprehension. The Unitarian's view of the subject involves no such inconsistency. He falls not, either, into the opposite error of denying all benefit, merit or efficacy to the death of Christ. He assigns to it a high rank and importance in the plan of the Gospel. He views the suffering Saviour in the light of a sacrifice for his sins; that is, as one who shrunk from no toil, no pain, nor even from

death, in the great work of reconciling sinful man to the Father, from whom he had estranged himself. But the whole application of the sacrifice he believes must be made by his own heart, by repenting of his transgressions, and by believing in and obeying that Gospel for which Christ died. Thus, while he avoids the absurdity of supposing that the impassible Deity suffered in order to alter the disposition of the unchangeable God, he clings to the doctrine of the atonement, in the scriptural sense of a divine method of reconciliation, as he does to his life; and persuaded as he is, that its sole design was to operate in the way of means and motives upon mankind, winning them to their Maker and their duty, he feels that if he would not, in respect to himself, frustrate this grace of God, he must consecrate his whole heart and life to christian piety and virtue.

Again. Behold our denomination embracing the golden mean, the safest, the clearest, the most impressive scheme *of the doctrine of future punishment.* We do not discourage men, by telling them that a few have been elected from eternity unto salvation, while all the rest are inevitably doomed to damnation. Nor do we interpret the figurative language of the Bible, whether in regard to the nature or the duration of punishment, in a manner at once foreign to the intention of the sacred writers, and revolting to reflecting minds. On the other hand, we do not destroy all distinction between the righteous and the wicked, nor promise them an equality of future happiness. We exhort them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, and warn them of consequences attached to transgression, inconceivably more dreadful than the poor gratifications purchased by their disobedience. We uniformly insist on a righteous

judgment after death, when every one's award will be according to his deeds done in the body. If there is any topic upon which we dwell more than upon others, it is, that the condition of men must forever correspond to the character they form.

Respecting the doctrines of divine decrees, foreknowledge, and predestination, as *Unitarians*, we neither deny nor enforce them, but generally leave them in edifying silence. The practical results of clear and well ascertained truths, seem enough to employ us in the present world.

We believe not in total depravity — we believe not in human perfection. We believe that our nature, moral as well as physical, is compound; and that it is our duty to co-operate with the blessed Saviour in diminishing as much as possible the amount of evil, and to increase as much as possible the amount of good, in the world.

Again — *In our views and use of the Bible*, we claim to follow that happy medium, which God must the most approve. There are some persons who believe that every word of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, as they now stand in the originals, and even in the English translation, was dictated by the Deity himself. But this has been shown by an eminent Calvinistic theologian of this country to be impossible. There are other persons again, who consider the whole mass of these writings as a fabrication and imposture. But how stands the case with Unitarians? They all maintain and defend the truth of the Bible, and they generally believe in the inspiration of the original writers, though differences of opinion confessedly exist among them respecting the precise degree and nature of that inspiration. But at all events, we find in the

Bible, from first to last, a grand and consistent scheme of religion and morals, which we would on no account exchange for any other that the world can afford. We would cleave to its representations of the character, and government, and operations of our Creator, of our duties towards him, towards our fellow men, and towards our individual selves; and we should feel, with trembling earnestness, that if the Bible were extinguished, the entire scheme of Unitarian Christianity would be extinguished too.

Again; I would ask, if there be no extravagance in exalting to an equality with the word of God, those errors in the English *translation of the scriptures*, which all Greek and Hebrew scholars of the present day, of every denomination without exception, concur in admitting to exist; and if there be none in obstinately maintaining the integrity of those passages, which the most fair and learned critics of all denominations, on consulting the best manuscripts, pronounce to be spurious? I would ask, on the other hand, if there be no extravagance in declaring, as too many do, that they will give up the whole Bible at once, if it can be shown that any corruptions whatever have been permitted, in the lapse of two thousand years, to creep into it? Now, between these two revolting species of extravagance, the Unitarian with firmness takes his stand, and while he considers the Bible too precious, for him to regard manifest errors and corruptions as a genuine part of it, he certainly considers it too precious, for him, on account of those comparatively few errors and corruptions, to throw entirely away.

So, too, with regard to our *rules and principles of scriptural interpretation*, while we avoid, on the one hand, those visionary schemes which reduce the whole Bible to

a kind of allegory, a wilderness of types and shadows, a labyrinth for the unlicensed fancy to revel in, in search of some spiritual hidden meaning, and in entire neglect of the letter — so, on the other hand, we remember and account for the prevalence of ancient imagery, and oriental figures of speech. We do not insist that every expression in the Bible shall be taken in its literal sense; for that would be to change the bread of the Lord's Supper into his real body, and to admit the shocking absurdity of representing him as an actual shepherd, or a door, or a way, or a lamb. These, and other similar expressions, we explain according to the common uses of language and we profess to fortify every figurative interpretation by other texts of scripture, where the meaning is evidently literal and plain. But the chief particular which distinguishes us from our opponents on the subject of scriptural interpretation is this. When a passage is susceptible of two different explanations, the one mysterious and the other clear, we think it our duty to adopt the clear in preference to the mysterious. Our opponents often insist upon the mysterious in preference to the clear, and thus maintain, as we apprehend, one of those fundamental extremes, which we are desirous to avoid.

With respect to *points of religious ceremony*, and ecclesiastical order, our sentiments and practices will be also found to maintain a scriptural and an eligible medium. We do not with some sects, deny the validity of the Lord's Supper, or of Baptism, or of the Sabbath; but we do not with other sects, require a particular creed to be subscribed or assented to before we will sit down with Christians at the table of our common Master, or conduct them or their children to our common font.

In matters of church government, we also preserve an equipoise between inconvenient extremes. We conduct our worship in organized and regular churches, and we entrust the administration of our ordinances to pastors of tried qualifications only. But on the other hand, we hold no particular form of church government to be essential. We do not, with the Episcopalian and Roman Catholic, say to all other denominations, your ministers are not of the true clergy, and have no apostolic authority to administer the ordinances. While the majority of Unitarians prefer the system of churches being entirely independent of each other, as most agreeable to original institutions, and to a perfect enjoyment of religious privileges, yet there is nothing incompatible with their principles, in ranging themselves voluntarily beneath the jurisdiction of a Unitarian Bishop, or subjecting themselves to the authority of a Unitarian Synod. The shape of the lamp alters not the brightness of its blaze ; and the spirit of Christianity, they believe, may burn and flourish in one external form as well as another.

In propagating their opinions, they disdain the leaven of proselytism on the one hand, but they equally disdain on the other, that silence, which acquiesces in the misrepresentation of their opinions, the injury of their good name, and the prevention of their means of doing good. We have great confidence in the moral and religious effects of a long, steady, serious, practical course of preaching, when founded on the principles that have been laid down in the foregoing discourse. If we do not aim at what are technically called Revivals of Religion, it is not that we are not anxious to see pure religion revive and flourish in every living man. But we believe that the

subjects of these revivals are made so, under a bewildering storm of feeling, while those who escape being influenced are often thrown into despair, or relapse into irreligion, under the idea, that as yet they have nothing to do with piety and Christianity. We address all our hearers, without distinction, as capable of religious feelings and religious duties. We wish religion to be revived in every heart, on every Sabbath day, on every morning, at every moment when it begins to decline. It is said that no conversions are made by Unitarians, and that we urge not the necessity of repentance and regeneration? They are the whole objects of our preaching. We could tell you of professed infidels becoming believers, of the thoughtless made serious, of the undevout brought to their knees, and of the wandering prodigal restored to his Father in heaven, beneath the influences of Unitarian preaching. But such conversions are registered in heaven, not blazoned through the land.

If there are preachers, or hearers among us, who are deficient in a religious zeal, it is no more than is the case with every sect, and certainly it is not the fault of our principles. Surely there is enough in those principles, to arouse and engage all the powers of the mind in their behalf. A lukewarm spirit must be set down as one of the *extravagances* which genuine Unitarian Christianity, when exerting its legitimate influences, entirely rejects. There can be no natural connexion between such a spirit and our system, since the very passage in scripture which most decidedly condemns lukewarmness,* describes Jesus as being but a part of the "creation of God," and represents his relation to his Father, even in glory, as only similar to the relation which his faithful disciples will

* Rev. iii. 14—22.

hereafter bear to himself.* Alive to the denunciation threatened against those who are "neither cold nor hot," we remember, at the same time, that we are not commanded to be fiery; we remember the rebuke which our Master at different times gave to his too zealous disciples; and we appreciate and admire the precept of St Paul, in its right and true application, "Let your *moderation* be known to all men." Afraid of ever inflaming the passions in behalf of religion, we should feel guilty if we did not strive to engage the interest and affections in a cause of such momentous importance. But we do lay, and we profess to lay great stress on a calm, reflecting, argumentative mode of dispensing religion. We wish men to feel surely and distinctly the grounds on which they rest. We think the habit of giving a good reason for every thing, ought never to be abandoned, and if abandoned in religion, we know not, we dread to know, where it would land us at last.

Our doctrines have been stigmatised as the half-way house to infidelity. Perhaps this fancied reproach will be found to contain the highest praise. If infidelity resides at one extremity of the great road of opinion, and blind credulity at the other, blessed is the man who can gain the half-way house between them, and find a shelter of peace, security, and happiness for his soul.

There are many who allow, that the Unitarian doctrines are the most reasonable, and have numerous passages of scripture to justify them; and yet they profess a dread of abandoning the scheme of what is called orthodoxy, since they know not where to stop. Miserable

* "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

timorousness indeed! Will not God take care of his own truth? Is there no strength in the human mind? Are there no solid principles of scriptural interpretation? Shall the door be shut upon examination? Did our Saviour and his Apostles, when they perceived those monstrous errors in the religion of the Jewish Pharisees, and of Pagan Rome, say, we will refrain from the work of extirpation and reformation, because it is impossible to tell where the human mind will stop? Did Luther and Calvin, and their intrepid brother reformers, act on this pusillanimous principle? If you are really conscientious, fear not to launch on the stream of truth, and it will never carry you too far.

Tell us not, by way of objection, of the extravagant speculations into which some of the German theologians have been borne It is just as unfair to charge the odium of such speculations upon Unitarianism, as it would be to say, that Calvinism leads to Unitarianism. What so frequent as this latter transition? BOSSUET's great charge against the Reformation was, that it conducted from one opinion to another, until it terminated in absolute infidelity. But the truth is, neither the Reformation nor Unitarianism is specifically liable to the charge. Infidelity was as prevalent in the bosom of the Romish church as it ever was in that of the Protestant. Its true origin, (as well as the true origin, I apprehend, of much that is called orthodoxy,) lies in *a partial consideration of the whole subject of Christianity.*

A strange and mistaken argument is adopted by some, for refusing to yield to their convictions, and espouse the cause of rational Christianity. They profess that they feel safer in believing too much than too little. But it is not proved that the Unitarianism contains too little. Our

system might easily be expanded out into a creed of more than one hundred important and impressive propositions. It is better, I apprehend, to believe exactly enough, than either too much or too little. We believe enough for human nature to bear; enough to fill all the conceptions, and regulate all the conduct. More is superfluous. On my pilgrimage through life, as on my travels through a country, I will not thank the guide who permits me to go beyond, any more than I will thank him who leads me to a spot short of a safe shelter for the night.

In the statement now presented of Unitarian doctrines, I beg it distinctly to be understood that I have not spoken in the capacity of an oracle, or an authority for our denomination. No given catalogue of articles could precisely correspond with the opinions entertained by every individual. I have aimed at such an outline as should express my own convictions, supported, as I am constrained to believe, by a very great majority of my brethren, so far as their views could be learned by extensive experience among them, and a still more extensive acquaintance with their writings. And if by this faithful exhibition of facts, I have but softened the unfavorable prejudices of a single person, I shall think my time and strength have not been applied in vain.

Our doctrines have been so often represented, as something monstrous, horrid, and extravagant, that it seemed a fit object of labor to strip such an illusion bare, and place the subject in its fair and true light. I have shown that such a charge, if it falls any where, must fall back on the heads of those who make it.

A still more prevalent idea every where entertained, is, that our system is encompassed with so many difficulties,

that it must be rejected by the humble and unlearned Christian. I have shown that the burden of difficulties falls on other systems.

Nor can it with any more justice be said, that our religion, by being placed at a distance from unwarrantable extremes, is a religion of mere negation and indifference It is easy to say of Unitarianism, "that it is neither one thing nor another." It seems more than that to those who encounter odium and persecution in its defence. It certainly is neither one *excess* nor another. But this impairs not its positive and substantial contents. Under every head of the foregoing discourse I have shown that we do any thing but "halt between two opinions," or hesitate between God and Baal*. We have chosen, and we act upon our 'opinions' in the face of the world, cleaving to the God of the Scriptures, and only rejecting such views of him as neither the prophets of the old, nor the founder of the new dispensation taught or demanded. I have shown, that while there is nothing in our articles of belief to offend the reflecting, pious mind, there is in them every thing to attract the attention, to engage men's religious wonder and awe, to excite the affections, to regulate the life, and to prepare for the realities of an eternal world. And what, after all, is their highest recommendation, I have shown that they are deduced from a faithful, reverent, enlightened, and rational interpretation of the scriptures.

We have not arrived at Unitarianism, by laying down the rule beforehand, that we would keep clear of widely opposing sentiments. This, I allow, might have been a fallacious mode of proceeding. But surely, if, on examining our opinions after they have been cautiously deduced

* Elijah.—1 Kings xviii. 21.

from scripture, we find that they actually are at equal distances from every kind of speculative and practical extreme, then, I maintain, that we have happily discovered a new and strong proof in their favor. To establish this proof by an induction of various particulars, has been the leading and specific aim of the foregoing remarks. The argument, I am confident, could be extended to many other topics in a similar manner. Enough, I trust, have been adduced to fortify and recommend our system in the view of unprejudiced minds.

That such a system will not eventually prevail, I entertain no fears whatever. Nor am I anxious, with some persons whom I revere, to exclude the use of the name Unitarian, as tending to keep alive the spirit of party. If there be really a distinction between the opinions of different Christians, what can be more convenient and appropriate than to adopt corresponding names descriptive of these opinions? You cannot make men think alike, by banishing distinctive names. With regard to the title Unitarian, none could be more happily selected. It has the advantage of expressing a fact—a doctrine, the foundation of all true religion. Viewed in its true light, it even comprehends the name of Christian. How much more preferable is it to those derived from a sectarian leader, such as Calvinist and Arminian, which even to this day, I think, savor somewhat of *personal* bias—or to those, originating from a contemptuous source, such as Methodist and Quaker, which have scarcely yet, with all the surpassing piety and virtues of those sects, shaken off the whole dust of their ancient opprobrium. We must be willing to encounter some unpopularity attached to our appellation. Let us only clear away the mistakes to which it is subjected. Let us be faithful to our acknowledged

principles; and the few and light pangs which a *name* gives us shall be amply rewarded by its constituting, as it is destined to do, the honor of our children, and the glory of theirs.

Yes, for the system of truth, which it designates, must prevail over the opposition now arrayed against it. Calculating, not as the member of a sect, but as an observer of human nature, I am entirely persuaded that the present outrageous and disproportioned prejudice against Unitarianism, must, from the very nature of things, ere long experience a re-action. It may, indeed, lacerate the feelings of a few timorous and tender hearted persons, it may induce others to be silent in spite of their convictions, and it may for a very short time, and in a very small degree, obstruct the progress of the offending doctrines. Yet on the other hand, zealous, but well meaning Trinitarians can have no possible idea of the astonishing contrary effect produced by violent and proscriptive measures. What does the past teach? I will venture to declare, that since the memorable Reformation conducted by Luther, there is no instance recorded in ecclesiastical annals of a progress so rapid and extensive in the dissemination of religious opinions as has taken place with respect to Unitarianism in America during the last fifteen years. And who are to be thanked for it? Why, none on earth but those, who perceiving the mere existence, or at most the slow and silent march of free inquiry stealing gradually along, saw fit to rouse its latent energies by interposing mounds of misrepresentation, or calling forth its mighty resistance by proscriptive denunciation. The re-action was inevitable, was irresistible. Unitarianism raised its sleeping head, shook from its brow the ineffectual arrows that were hurled from every quarter against it, and strode

forth to unexpected, unsought for, and unexampled victory.

These representations of the fact are not put forth in the spirit of boasting, but rather in that of humiliation. I lament that the glory and the triumph of a good cause have been laid on a foundation so disparaging to the spirit of the age, and so degrading to the character of opponents. But so it is. Men of thinking minds, of independent souls, of pure consciences, were not to be intimidated by mere clamor. This is not the country where a brief unpopularity is to obstruct the progress of any branch of free inquiry. We are too much accustomed to the storms and fluctuations of party in political life, not to know that religious agitation will speedily subside unless backed and perpetuated by civil power. Accordingly, Unitarians have had only to be firm, and thousands have rushed to their standard. Their exertions, as a sect, have been almost entirely negative, or perhaps re-active. They have only had to explain — to answer charges — to throw light on Scripture passages — to call Trinitarian creeds to the test — to wield the artillery of defence — and behold, how unexpected to both sides has been the effect! Calumny has goaded the supporters of the Unitarian cause into a partial concentration and systematization of effort. Pulpit denunciations have only driven inquisitive hearers into the obnoxious places of worship, and those who came to chide, remained to pray.

And the process is going on. The re-action is growing stronger and stronger. The coming generation will wonder, what excesses of immorality, what daring acts of impiety, what freaks of folly and absurdity, exhibited by Unitarianism, could provoke in their fathers so much hostility against it. Even now it finds some professed

advocates in almost every church in Christendom. Even now there are innumerable unconscious Unitarians in all churches, who scarcely dare to think that they are so, but who have no other mode of explaining their meaning, when the touchstone of inquiry is applied to their belief. Even now, also, nearly every week brings tidings of some new church established on these dear and sacred principles, in spite of a compacted and persevering enginery of bitter opposition, which would overwhelm any other cause in the world, but one, founded on the felt principles of everlasting truth. For every single individual who abandons Unitarianism, it is an undeniable fact, that more than one whole congregation accedes to the system. And such, I see and feel, will be the proportion of its progress to that of its decline, for centuries to come. Unnumbered serious, pious, and conscientious inquirers, when shocked by the excesses, and staggered by the difficulties, in which the present popular systems of orthodoxy are involved, yet still more shocked and staggered by the opposite excesses and difficulties attending on irreligion and infidelity, must, I devoutly believe, after vibrating from opinion to opinion, and from doubt to doubt, find no place for their trembling, wearied souls to rest in, but that blessed poise of Unitarian Christianity, through which the directest line is drawn from earth to heaven.

1st Series. No. 30.

ON

THE NEW TESTAMENT

CONFORMED TO

GRIESBACH'S TEXT.

BY F. W. P. GREENWOOD.

PRINTED FOR THE

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This tract may be regarded as a continuation of the series commenced with No. 26, 'On the Original Text of the New Testament.' It was first published in the Christian Examiner, as a Review of Rev. J. G. Palfrey's edition of 'The New Testament in the common version, conformed to Griesbach's standard Greek Text,' which was printed in Boston in 1828. The character of the work which it notices, and the importance of the subject, have led to the publication of the review in this form; and it is hoped that it will be instrumental in obtaining for that work the circulation which it merits.

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GRIESBACH'S TESTAMENT.

It is a simple and well known fact, that the ancients multiplied copies of their books by the slow and laborious process of writing; or, in other words, that all their books were manuscripts. And when we say all their books, we mean, of course, to include the books of the Old and the New Testament, both of which, especially the former, are collections of very ancient writings, and were, of course, multiplied by transcription, as all other writings were.

This fact we have called a well known one. And yet, well known as it is, it does not seem to be generally borne in mind. There is nothing more common, we believe, to the experience of those who have been called upon to defend in conversation some disputed religious doctrine, than to find that any argument founded on the principles of biblical criticism, is received with a great deal of uneasiness and suspicion, and that even an allusion to the original languages of the bible, is regarded as a blind, or a subterfuge, which may be conveniently resorted to in all cases of necessity. It is very extraordinary indeed, after all that has been said on this subject, that so many people persist in talking of the bible, as if the only one which was, or ever had been in existence, was that which was

published in English by the authority of James I. At the bare sound of the word manuscript, they start and look incredulous; just as if there were any books in the world *but* manuscripts, till about four hundred years ago, a mere date of yesterday; and as if every portion of the Old Testament and New, every prophecy, gospel, and epistle, had been printed on the spot, the moment it was uttered or written, and had been in type ever since. These are conclusions, to be sure, which would not be acknowledged by these persons, but still they are conclusions which are justifiably drawn from their conduct. They are not so ignorant as to maintain that our common English New Testament was printed, just as it is, in the first age of Christianity; but still they act as if it was, because they are averse to acknowledge that any use is to be made of the fact, that the original language of the christian scriptures was an entirely different one from our own, and the other fact, that they were preserved and handed down by means of the pen alone, for the space of fourteen hundred years.

There is one subject connected with these facts, which, when it is presented barely, and without explanation, is apt to trouble even the liberal and the well informed. It is the subject of the various readings of the scriptures. By various readings, we mean, all those words or passages, all those insertions or omissions, in which any authority for settling the text of the scriptures differs from the received text. Now, when a serious and sincere Christian is abruptly told, for the first time and without any commentary, that in the New Testament alone, these various readings amount to the enormous number of one hundred and thirty thousand; that there are, in the manuscripts and ancient versions of the christian scriptures, a

hundred and thirty thousand variations from the book which he has always read and revered as the New Testament, it is not surprising if he should be disturbed at the intelligence, and feel as if the very foundations of his faith had received a rude shock.

We wish to show, to the satisfaction of every one, that these various readings have nothing to do with the foundations of our faith, and do not in the least affect them. We shall not say anything which will be new to the scholar; of that we are well aware. Our intention is not to display learning, but to state plain considerations in a plain way. We shall confine ourselves, for the sake of unity of subject, to the various readings of the New Testament, though the Hebrew scriptures have also their various readings.

We shall show, first, that in the natural course of things, copies of the writings of the New Testament could not have been preserved from errors. We shall show, secondly, that it is unreasonable to require that they should be exempted from this natural course. Thirdly, we shall exhibit the kind and degree of alteration which ought to be made in the received text, in consequence of the various readings of manuscripts. And fourthly, we shall state the advantages which we derive from the possession of numerous manuscripts, differing in their readings.

We are to show, in the first place, that the writings of the New Testament, in the long course of transcription which they underwent, could not have been preserved from variations and errors, in the natural course of things.

To settle this point, one or two considerations only are necessary. By the natural course of things, we are to understand the course which is found to hold true in all similar cases. To ascertain what this course is, there-

fore, we are to ascertain what the fact is, in this particular, with regard to the other writings of antiquity. We shall find that they all have their errors and their various readings. Among the classics, Terence, according to good authority, is one of the least corrupted and mutilated which remain to us; and yet the best copy of it extant, which is preserved in the library of the Vatican at Rome, contains numerous errors, which can only be corrected by reference to those of inferior worth. "I, myself," says Dr Bentley, in his answer to Collins, the Deist, who had attacked the authority of the christian scriptures, on account of their various readings, "I, myself, have collated several, and do affirm that I have seen 20,000 various lections in that little author, and am morally sure, that if half the number of manuscripts were collated for Terence, with that niceness and minuteness which has been used in twice as many for the New Testament, the number of the various readings would amount to above 50,000."

Poetical works possess some advantages in transcription over those which are in prose, because the transcriber is guided by the quantity, harmony, and laws of verse; and yet the author quoted above informs us, that the variations in the poet Manilius are twice as many as the lines.

Errors multiplied in ancient writings with great rapidity, even soon after they were given to the world. Martial, in one of his epigrams, (B. vii. Ep. 10.) mentions the circumstance, that a copy of his poems was sent to him by one of his friends, in order that it might be corrected by his own pen and hand. There can be no stronger proof than this fact, incidentally mentioned, of the immediate danger of corruption, which all books at that time were in; for we see here, that notwithstanding this author's works were in poetry, notwithstanding, also, they

consisted of short detached epigrams, containing on an average, about half a dozen lines apiece, yet they stood in pressing need of correction in their author's lifetime.

There is another consideration, which falls within the limits of every one's experience. There are few, probably, who have not observed how soon any piece of writing becomes filled with errors, by being copied by various hands. Let any one send abroad a letter or an essay of his own, in manuscript, of which people may desire to keep copies, and let it be copied by friends and relations, by man, woman, and child; and then at the end of a year or two, let a few of these copies be brought to him; let him carefully read these copies, and compare them with each other, and with the original; and when he has done, he will well understand what various readings are. He will soon be wearied of making a list of them, even though his essay might not be half the length of one of the books of the New Testament. If he will then reflect that the New Testament is in prose; that it is considerably voluminous; that the original manuscripts, the autographs of the sacred penmen, have been long ago lost, and that therefore the manuscripts which we have, are copies of copies, taken one from another, through a period of fourteen centuries, and never corrected from a common authority, because that authority was not in existence; if he will reflect, that during a portion of that period, the christian religion was rapidly spreading, and consequently, that copies of the christian scriptures, being in great demand, must have been written in haste, and often by those, who, from their ignorance, were incompetent to the task; and that, moreover, every copyist must have copied at least some of the errors of the manuscript which he was transcribing, and at the same time have added

some of his own; if he will reflect on all this, he will be convinced, that, in the natural course of things, the New Testament could not possibly have been preserved from a vast number of literal, verbal, and other errors.

To describe the causes of various readings minutely, would be to take up too much of our readers' time. Suffice it to observe, that every one who has had occasion to copy pieces of considerable length, will become acquainted with most of them by trial. He will find that sometimes he will repeat a word, and sometimes he will omit one, and sometimes he will mispel one; that now and then he will unintentionally introduce a word of his own instead of the synonymous one used by his author; that again he will transpose the words in a sentence; and that again he will wholly pass over a line or a sentence, misled by its termination or other circumstances. These are some, and only some of the causes of various readings, which are common to all writings, ancient and modern. But there were difficulties peculiar to the transcription of ancient works, arising from the mode in which they were written. The oldest manuscripts extant are written without any intervals between the words, or any stops, or any breaks at the close of paragraphs. That is to say, a book, the Gospel of Matthew for instance, is written in unbroken continuity, as if it were one long entire word from its first letter to its last. This method would of course give rise to some errors, which would not occur in modern writings, executed in the modern way.

As it has now been shown, and we presume, satisfactorily, that the books of the New Testament could not, in the common course of transcription, have been preserved from almost innumerable errors, we shall pro-

ceed, in the second place, to show, that it is unreasonable to require for it an exemption from that course.

It is unreasonable to require this, because it is to require, that a greater miracle should be performed to effect it, than any which the sacred volume itself records. It is to require a constant miracle; a miracle operating visibly and wonderfully in a thousand different and distant parts of the globe, and at almost every hour of time, through a period of fourteen hundred years. It is to require a miracle which should confer the gift of infallibility, in one particular at least, on hosts of monks and scribes, whether good or bad, indolent or active, ignorant or learned, through a long series of ages, and in all varieties of situation and condition. Now to require this, is to make a requisition without reason, and without occasion. If there were any end, of vast, of inconceivable importance to be answered by such an extraordinary deviation from the natural order of events, then the requisition might not be so absurd; but there is, in reality, no such end to be answered. This assertion we are next to prove

We are to exhibit, in the third place, the kind and degree of alteration, which the received text should undergo in consequence of the various readings of manuscripts; or, to state the point in another form, we are to answer the question, How far the New Testament, as it is in common use, will be changed, or its integrity affected, by a careful and impartial comparison of the manuscripts which remain to us.

A person not versed at all in this subject might readily suppose, that a hundred and thirty thousand various readings, if they were not enough to render the whole body of the christian scriptures doubtful, were at least sufficient to cut the received text in pieces, and destroy its

integrity and authority utterly. A few words will prove that this is not the case.

Let us see how these various readings are brought together; how they came to amount to such a serious sum. On examination, we find that all the variations which are discovered in the ancient versions or translations, such as the Syriac, Ethiopic, or Arabic, whether they appear to have been faithfully or carelessly executed; and all those too which occur in the quotations of the New Testament by the earlier Fathers, wherever they seem to have intended to quote accurately; all are carefully noted down, and added to the variations of manuscripts, to swell the account of various readings. We likewise find that every degree and description of variation, even in the smallest and most unimportant words, is noted, and the results are thrown upon the general heap of various readings.

With this preliminary knowledge, we approach the formidable sum of one hundred and thirty thousand; and the first fact which presents itself to us, is, that we may at once deduct one half of the whole, as being of no consequence, or as being supported by only one or two comparatively unimportant and modern manuscripts. Of the remaining half, we shall be told, that at least two thirds are readings which have about as much evidence in their support as the corresponding ones in the received text, and no more, and therefore are not permitted to disturb the preoccupied places of these latter. The hundred and thirty thousand are now brought down to about twenty thousand. Of these about half may be thought by an editor to be inferior in goodness to the received text, and the other half may be thought to be better. But of this remaining half he will think that thousands are not so decidedly better, not accompanied by so weighty a pre-

ponderance of evidence, as to give them a clear title to eject the established readings. There will then be one or two thousand, which must be adopted into an improved text instead of the old ones. But what is the nature of these preferred readings? The greater part of them, by far the greater part, are of critical importance merely, not affecting the sense of the passages, in which they occur, in the least degree. They will consist of expletives, or in the absence of expletives, of synonymous words, and of differing collocations. A very few may alter the sense of a passage, or the aspect of a fact, and one or two will have some, though not an essential, bearing on doctrine. Thus dwindle down the hundred and thirty thousand various readings of the New Testament. And thus it is evident, that they furnish no ground of alarm for the integrity of the sacred text. Why then should we call for a miraculous exertion of divine power, to put a stop to a natural course of things, which has done, and probably could do no injury?

But not only is there no injury done by the examination of the four hundred manuscripts of the New Testament, and the collection and comparison of all their various readings, but there is absolutely great good effected by these circumstances. Of this we were to speak under the fourth head.

By the collation of all these manuscripts, then, and the preparation of an emended text from them, we are assured that we have the sacred books in a much more perfect form than we had them before, and more nearly as they came from the hands of their writers. It is invariably found, that those ancient classics, which are edited from the smallest number of manuscripts, are the most full of errors, some of which cannot possibly be corrected

except by conjecture, which is always an unsafe guide, and in such a book as the New Testament almost always an inadmissible one. If we had possessed only one manuscript of our sacred books at the time when they were first put to press, and had never been able to discover any afterwards, there would indeed have been no talk about manuscripts and various readings, but we could not have felt sure that this one copy was a correct one, and we might have been continually tempted to emend it for ourselves. In short, the more manuscripts we have, the more correct we make the book which is prepared from them, because the more sources of correction there will be in our power.

The second advantage which we derive from the possession of numerous manuscripts, is the assurance which we thereby gain, that the sacred text has never been essentially changed or corrupted. We not only have it in a correct, and probably almost perfect state, but we know that it has never been very incorrect, so far as its meaning, its history, or its doctrine is concerned. Possessing manuscripts contributed from almost every country in which Christianity was ever known, and written in almost every age of the church, some of them as far back as the fourth and fifth centuries; possessing versions in almost all the ancient languages, and of the earliest dates; possessing also quotations from our scriptures, in the works of the Fathers, from the most ancient times; and finding that all these essentially agree; that they contain the same histories, the same miracles, the same doctrines, the same exhortations, and the same commandments, we have the great satisfaction and advantage of knowing, that the scriptures were read as we read them, by churches and by individuals, by saints and martyrs, and confessors,

and holy men of all tongues, and in every time; and that although the church was very soon, and always continued to be, divided into parties and sects, yet the books of our faith were never altered or corrupted by their prejudices and passions. And so we see, that this subject of the various readings, instead of being one of uneasiness and alarm, should be one of congratulation.

We have said, that the received text, or Testament in common use, would not be essentially changed by the adoption of the best readings from manuscripts. This is so true, that a person who should take up the amended text, as it is given in the book whose title we have placed at the head of this article, might read in a hundred different pages, without perceiving that he was not reading our common English text. But if the contrary had been true, if ever so much alteration had been called for by the undoubted voice of the best and oldest manuscripts, then we say and insist, that the alteration, to whatever extent, ought to be made in the common Greek text, and in all translations from it, and ought to be universally adopted, and the more important the alteration, the more urgent is the demand for its adoption.

Is there any need that we should explain or enforce this assertion? The general want of knowledge and want of interest with regard to the subject are such, that we believe there *is* need, and we will therefore go on, and try to produce the conviction of a truth, which ought to approve itself to every serious mind in Christendom, that the best text of our scriptures ought to be the received text; that all christian people ought to possess the records of their faith in a form as near as possible to that in which they were written by the sacred penmen; and that in all

christian churches, those words only should be read to the congregation, as the words of evangelists and apostles, which on an examination of the proper authorities for settling the text appear to be such.

What is the received text of the English New Testament? Let us turn to the titlepage of the book, and see. It reads thus;—"The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *translated out of the original Greek;* and with the former translations diligently compared and revised, *by his majesty's special command.*" The titlepage, then, of this book, acquaints us with the fact, that the book does not pretend to give us the words or language of the sacred penmen, but only a translation from them. The expression is, "*Translated out of the original Greek.*" What original Greek? The very copy which the evangelists and apostles wrote with their own hands? The supposition is absurd, for every autograph, or original writing of those holy men, had been lost ages before the time of king James I. of England, by whose "special command" this translation was made. What original Greek then? The Greek of the best and oldest manuscripts? No; but the printed Greek of an edition of the Testament, which had come into common use on account of the beauty of its type, and which had not been prepared from one sixteenth the number of manuscripts, which have since that time been examined by the learned. Does this edition, from which James's translation was made, represent faithfully, or as faithfully as there are means of ascertaining, the "original Greek" of the sacred penmen? No scholar, nobody who knows anything about the matter, pretends that it does. Why then should our English translation continue to be conformed to it? Why, when we have a purer text, why, in the names of common sense and Christianity, do we not

make a general and popular use of it? Shall we be forever reading, and preaching, and quoting from a book, which is acknowledged not to be a translation from the best text of the original Greek?

And we would have it carefully noted here, that with the received translation, *considered as an interpretation*, we have, in this tract, nothing to do. It is true, that there are many passages in it, which are incorrectly rendered from passages in the Greek, of the genuineness of which there is no doubt. But we now confine ourselves to it, exclusively as a representation in English of the original Greek, and contend, that as it does not represent the most accurate text of the original Greek, it ought to be altered till it does. We acknowledge ourselves attached to the phraseology of the received English version, but not at all attached to a corrupt original text. Without meddling, therefore, with the diction of our common Testament, or even, at present, with its misrepresentations of the sense of certain passages of the original, we repeat, that it ought to be conformed to a correct text of that original. Such a text has been presented to us by the labors of the learned Griesbach; and till a faithful representation of that text in English is brought into common use, we are using in our churches, families, and closets, as sacred scripture, a book, which, as we are obliged to confess, contains expressions and passages which the sacred penmen never wrote.

Should we not manifest a becoming reverence for the scriptures, by reading, and learning, and disseminating them in their purity? As it is, do we not manifest more reverence for old usage and custom, than for the scriptures?

What is called the received text of the original Greek,

is daily growing out of use, and Griesbach's text is taking its place in colleges, schools, and libraries. How long shall the received English text contradict, in several passages, the most approved Greek text? Is there any reason why the Greek should be purified, and the English left impure as before?

Have not the christian public a right to the most correct text of their translated scriptures? Ought they not to understand this right, to feel it, to urge it, and cause it to be respected? Have they not a right only, but are they not under a solemn obligation to do this? Is it not our duty to have by us, whether we understand the original Greek or not, a translation of the words actually written down by the evangelists and apostles, as nearly as we can ascertain them?

If it is objected, that it would be difficult to make the proposed alterations in the common version, our answer is, that the work is already done, and well done. The title of the volume which has called forth these remarks, is, "The New Testament in the Common Version, conformed to Griesbach's Standard Greek Text." This is precisely the book which was wanted; the book which should be in the hands of every man, woman, and child, in our country, superseding the Testament which is now in common use.

It is very true, that a new translation of the christian scriptures, which would suit all religious denominations, is hardly to be expected, because in translation there is necessarily so much contested interpretation. But the volume before us is not a new translation. It is the old translation conformed to an acknowledged standard text of the original language. The words of king James's translators are in no case altered, except where a change in the original Greek required it. This rule has been

scrupulously adhered to by the gentleman who prepared the volume. He has not departed from it even in instances, in which he would have been borne out by the approbation of all christian interpreters, of every mode of faith. He has not trenched in the least upon debatable ground. To use his own words, he has not "attempted any such work as that of a revised translation of the New Testament. He has exactly reprinted the Common Version, except in places where the Greek text, from which that version was made, is now understood to have been faulty. In other words, he has aimed to present the Common Version precisely such as it would have been, if the translators could have had access to the standard text of Griesbach, instead of the adulterated text of Beza. In the translations which he has introduced to correspond to the amended Greek, it has been his careful endeavor to imitate the style of the received version, and no one has been admitted without study and consideration."

Here then, we say, is exactly the volume which was wanted, and which ought to be brought immediately into general use. We are convinced, both from the use which we have made of it ourselves, and from the known literary character of the Rev. Mr Palfrey, that it has been prepared with faithful labor, accuracy, and entire impartiality. It is not because this gentleman, who, though his name appears not on the titlepage of the book, is well understood to have given this important work to the public, it is not, we say, because he happens to stand in the same class of Christians with ourselves, and holds the opinions which we maintain, that we thus recommend the fruit of his labors. We have the testimony of our conscience, that if the same work had proceeded from a member, or a school of any denomination of Christians

whatever, executed with the same faithful conformity to the amended original text, we should have received it with the same gladness and thankfulness that we do now, and urged its universal adoption with the same earnestness that we do now. Moreover, we invite all the learned, of every sect and name, to examine this volume critically and thoroughly, and to make known the least deviation which they may find in it, from the standard text of Griesbach, which it purports exactly to follow.* When this is done, and the volume is made as perfect as possible, we not only request, but demand that it be adopted by all Christians. We demand this boldly, and yet without presumption, because we make our demand in the name, and with the authority of the pure word of God; and every one, who has any right to an opinion on this subject, must know, and ought to confess, that to bring our English Testament into conformity with the standard original, is an undertaking which has not the least connexion with any question of party, and which may as well be performed by one person as another, so that it be performed faithfully. Griesbach himself was a Trinitarian. But do we, as Unitarians, refuse on that account to receive his amended text of the original Greek? On the contrary, Unitarians have been among the most forward to adopt it. If it would be absurd, as it certainly would be, to make the reception of the original a party question, it would be equally absurd to make the reception of an English text conformed to it, a party question. All parties, and those who are of no party, ought to unite, and unite at once, in adopting both. The time is fully come.

* This edition of the New Testament has now been before the public more than a year, and not a single impeachment of its impartiality, or doubt of its correctness and fidelity, has come to our knowledge from any quarter.—*November*, 1829.

We have once or twice already mentioned the fact, that there is no very striking difference between the common text and the amended one. This is a subject of congratulation surely, but it does not alter the truth of another position which we have taken, that be the difference great or little, striking or unobservable, between the common and amended text, the latter ought to supersede the former, in all countries and languages, churches and families, on the plain and simple ground that it is the genuine one, the one which makes the nearest attainable approximation to the actual words of the evangelists and apostles. Moreover, though there is no important general variation between the two texts, there are some particular instances of difference which are of considerable moment.

We should say, that the chief of these instances of various readings was the celebrated verse, 1 John v. 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." The words beginning "in heaven," and continuing to the end of the verse, together with a part of the next verse, are found in no ancient manuscripts, nor in any ancient translation, nor are they quoted by any ancient Father. This mass of evidence against the text was so strong, that Griesbach refused it a place in his edition, as being no part of the epistle of John. Consequently, the amended English edition, instead of the words, which in the common version occupy the seventh and eighth verses, reads thus; "For there are three that bear record; the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." This reading is important, because the rejected passage is the only one in the whole New Testament, in which the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost are asserted to be one, in any sense, and because it is a passage, which, being often brought forward by the uninformed

supporters of the doctrine of the trinity, as an irrefragable proof of that doctrine, obliges those who are informed, on either side of the question, to go through the oft told, and always suspected tale of its spuriousness. But though important in the above respects, the reading is not important as conclusive of the trinitarian controversy; for, while on the one side, Trinitarians maintain, that, without the spurious passage, there is ample evidence of the trinity in other parts of the scriptures, on the other side, Unitarians say, that, granting the passage to be genuine, still it does not support the Trinitarian doctrine, because the phrase "these three are one," does not signify that they are one in substance, one thing, or one being, but one in design, purpose, and operation: and this their explanation is not only reasonable in itself, but is supported by Trinitarians, even by Calvin, who says, "The expression, 'three are one,' must signify in agreement, rather than in essence." It is hardly worth while, however, to investigate the meaning of the passage, when it is so decidedly a spurious one.

And yet, confessedly spurious as it is, it continues to be printed in our bibles, read in our pulpits, studied in our closets. Once a year it is read, we presume, in all the English and American Episcopal churches; for it stands in the book of Common Prayer as part of the Epistle for the first Sunday after Easter. Yes, in all those churches, periodically, and in many other churches, we suppose, occasionally, a passage is read to the people, as a portion of God's holy word, which the majority of the clergymen who read it, believe to be, what it most probably is, a gloss interpolated by some transcribing monk.* Such apathy surprises us. We do not know what to make of

* Some transcriber of a Latin version, not of the original Greek, because, though the passage appears in the Latin Vulgate, it is found in the text of no Greek manuscript of any authority whatever.

it. We do not understand how men, who, for the most part, believe, that the genuine words of the scripture were dictated by the spirit of God, can read, as scripture, a set of words which they confess are not genuine. On their own principles, are they not in danger? On any principles, do they not contradict themselves?

If this passage, the text of the three heavenly witnesses, as it is called, had never been inserted in our English bibles, and some one should now come forward and demand its insertion on the authority of the Latin Vulgate, would it not be instantly rejected, by Trinitarian and Unitarian, with surprise and indignation at the effrontery of the proposal? And with the same promptness with which it would have been rejected in such a case, ought it not to be omitted, as the case is now? Does the circumstance of its having long occupied a place to which it had no right, give it any authority? Does the fact of its having been printed in millions of English bibles, or French, or Italian, or Latin bibles, make it any more a part of the original Greek, and the words of St John, than it was before a single bible in any language was printed on the earth?

We have given a reading of importance, in which the amended differs from the common text. Various readings of equal, or nearly equal importance, are extremely rare. An example of another omitted passage, of no importance but in a critical point of view, occurs in the same chapter of the first epistle of John, in the thirteenth verse. We give it, merely as an example of the class of various readings which do not affect either doctrine or fact. In the common version we read, "These things have I written unto you *that believe on the name of the Son of God*, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, &c." In the amended version, the words which we have italicized are

omitted, and the verse reads, "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know ye have eternal life, &c." As a specimen of readings of still less importance, we may mention one in 1 Thess. ii. 15. In the common version we read, "Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and *their own* prophets." In the amended version we read, "Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and *the* prophets." There are, as we have said, many more various readings of this last very unimportant description, than of any other.

Besides these variations in words and sentences, Griesbach has introduced others in the punctuation of the original, and in these also he is followed by the Editor of the amended English version. It will be borne in mind, that we stated, when we were describing the causes of various readings, that the most ancient Greek manuscripts are written not only without marks of punctuation, but without any spaces between the words. Of course, when punctuation came in use, the only guides to it must have been the sense and connexion of what was written. In most cases these guides would give such plain directions, that there could be no doubt where a stop should be placed, where a sentence should begin, and where it should end, or whether it should be read affirmatively or interrogatively. In many instances, however, in which there was room for two modes of punctuation, Griesbach has, on good authority, adopted one differing from that of the received text. In these instances the amended English version necessarily obeys its adopted leader.

It was not our intention, however, to enter into an examination of the English version as amended according to Griesbach's standard text, but to press its general adoption, on the firm, broad, and conceded ground of its genuineness. If it is an object that we should all possess, read, and study the christian scriptures in all possi-

ble purity, we cannot too strongly urge the claims of the amended English version of the New Testament, to the exclusion of the text now commonly received.

We presume that many, and many of those who feel the importance of having an amended text in use, will say that such an event is impossible; that it is impossible to effect any alteration in the received text, widely circulated as it is, and holding possession, as it does, of all churches, and families, wherever the English tongue is spoken. We answer, that nothing, but a proper understanding of the subject and a proper sense of its importance, is wanted, to cause the immediate introduction of the amended Testament. It is not to be desired, by any means, that the copies of the English New Testament now in use should be destroyed or given up by those who hold them, but it is to be desired that all copies printed hereafter should be corrected according to Griesbach's text. Thus the old text would gradually go out of use. We do not expect that this will be done, but it might be done, if there was only a disposition to do it.

How easily might the authorities of the English Established Church issue their decree, that all the New Testaments printed under their control, should be, after a certain period, conformed to the standard Greek text?

How easily might all Bible Societies determine, that, after a certain period, they would issue no copies of the New Testament, but such as were conformed to the standard Greek text? We are told that the American Bible Society have formed the grand design of printing two millions of bibles forthwith, in order to furnish a bible to every destitute family in our country. Would not their design be yet more grand, if they were to resolve to print all the copies of the New Testament according to a pure original? Could not such a resolution be easily carried

into effect? We call upon the Society to do this. We beseech them to send forth among the people no more acknowledged adulterations of the christian scriptures.

How easily might all christian societies resolve to hear, and all christian ministers resolve to read from the pulpit or desk, none but an amended text of the New Testament? We earnestly desire them to form such a resolution, and to carry it into execution.

How easily might all translations of the christian scriptures be made from a pure, instead of an impure original? Why will translators diffuse and perpetuate, in various languages, what they know to be errors, instead of using their power and opportunity to amend them?

Why should not individuals, who wish to purchase copies of the New Testament for themselves or families, ask for the amended, instead of the common version? Will they not prefer a correct to an incorrect text? Do they wish to read for scripture what in all human probability is not scripture?

If these various and simple means were pursued, would not the amended English Testament be gradually introduced, and become itself the common one?

Either the changes made in the present version to conform it to a pure original, are very great and numerous, or they are inconsiderable in magnitude and number. If they are very great, then the adoption of the amended version is the more loudly called for; if they are inconsiderable, as we know them to be, then its adoption will be the more easy, as the change will be an almost imperceptible one.

We reiterate our appeal to the common sense and the religious feeling of all who may read these pages, in favor of "The New Testament in the Common Version, conformed to Griesbach's Standard Greek Text."

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THE

DANGER OF DELAY.

By WILLIAM WARE.

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THE DANGER OF DELAY.

Boast not thyself of tomorrow.—Prov. xxvii. 1.

And yet, although this is the counsel of both reason and scripture, and although every man if he thinks of the matter a moment must be convinced of its wisdom, how few practically regard it. Indeed, if there is any one thing in which men seem most to agree, it is in reversing this precept of Solomon,—boasting of tomorrow—reckoning upon it. They are not in general, judging by their conduct, more sure of today than they are of tomorrow. They speak with as much confidence of the business they shall transact, the journeys they shall commence, the studies they shall pursue, the good or evil deeds they shall attempt or complete on the morrow, as of what they shall do today or the next moment. But the wise man would rebuke this spirit. He would warn us against the presumption of relying on tomorrow — or even on another moment beyond the present, seeing the one, strictly speaking, is as uncertain as the other. And we must give to his language in the text, if we would receive its true meaning, not a literal and narrow interpretation, but understand him to speak of all future time under the similitude of tomorrow. Boast not thyself, O

man! he would say, of that which is concealed behind the veil of the future. Place not thy hope in its uncertainties. Defer not thy work of duty to opportunities that may never arrive. Delay not to forsake thy sin and turn unto God, thinking that when tomorrow dawns thou wilt be better prepared. Postpone not an irksome task to the future in the belief that it will then be pleasanter and easier. Trust not to the deceptive language of the heart, that by and by the heart and life shall be wholly and cheerfully surrendered to God, but that now there must be indulgence and ease, and devotion to other and pressing cares. Centre all thy hopes, if thou wouldst be wise, in today. Do now, what thou wishest to do, and which if not done in season, thou knowest well, thy life will be a burden, and eternity a terror. *Now* is thine, tomorrow may never be.

Such is the true sense of the prudent king's maxim. It is a maxim not only of Jewish, but of Christian, and universal morals.

And it derives its importance, not wholly nor chiefly, from any bearing it can have upon the transactions of *this* world. It is indeed wise in the most inconsiderable affairs not to trust to tomorrow, for what can be done today. And in many of the dealings of man with man, the heaviest losses and most grievous mischances have overtaken him, because he was so stupid, or so thoughtless, or so rash, as to put off to another day a labor that should have been done now. Many a battle has been lost, many a city surprised and sacked, many a house burned to the ground, many a fair ship foundered or wrecked, many a calamity for which there was no remedy has overtaken individuals and communities, by deferring

till tomorrow, or even another hour, what was the business of the present moment. So that in its relation to the prosperity of men and their welfare in this present world, it is important that a man do not reckon on tomorrow when today is in his hands. And it were earnestly to be wished, that the indubitable sorrows and distressing adversities, that come upon multitudes of those who procrastinate in the things of this brief and transitory scene of our being, would but serve as lessons and warnings, to make them active and seasonable in the more momentous concerns touching the soul and its future condition, and to teach them that consequences of wo, dreadful beyond all comparison with what ever happen on earth, will follow that fatal procrastination, that shall defer to a day or hour too late the repentance and preparation, on which heaven and salvation depend.

It is of delay, as respects the imperishable interests of the immortal soul, that I am now to speak. And it is with reference to these interests, and the preparation for the future life that Religion exhorts us in earnest and solemn tones—trust not to—reckon not upon—defer not till—tomorrow.

1. The work which man has to do is too great and too important to bear postponement and be put upon the hazard of such an uncertainty.

If this work of self-preparation, which both sound reason and religion demand at our hands, were like many of the petty concerns of this life, on which little depends, and from which no solemn consequences flow, it might, indeed, be put off, and oftentimes no evil ensue—or none but such as might be repaired. But I would

put it to the conscience of every reflecting man, if it be such a work, if there be any to be placed in comparison with it for its magnitude? And yet, there is no duty, however insignificant, in the way of our daily calling, no affair of business, that concerns our worldly interest, that we so lightly defer to another day, as this which concerns the soul and eternity. Though a man will, indeed, now and then meet a heavy loss in his fortune, because he loitered, or trifled, or stood still, when he should have pressed swiftly on, yet generally, let there be a great object to be accomplished, bearing on reputation, advancement, or property, and the hour of action cannot come too soon, and the work to be done cannot call for so much time and industry and labor, as will stand waiting to be employed, and he would no more delay to act, and in season too, than he would to satisfy the crying wants of his animal nature. But is it often so in religion? Is it often that we see this eagerness to embrace a present opportunity—that we see men trembling lest today should pass by and nothing be done for their peace? Yet with what reason might we tremble, when we think of what it is which we have to accomplish, and the little time at the very best that is given us for the work, and the danger that ere it is half done, even if we labor with diligence, death may surprise us.

For what is this work of religion? It is to prepare ourselves against the solemnities and final allotments of God's judgment day. Our minds, through all their powers and capacities, are to be educated and filled with knowledge both of human and divine things. Our desires, that so love to rest on sensual and temporary things, are to be raised to spiritual objects. Our affections are to be sanctified and

find their rest in Heaven. Our habits are all to be gained over to the side of virtue. Our lives are to be made subject to the universal rules of purity and integrity. If we have been wanderers from God and slaves to sin, the task of repentance is to be begun and completed. If we are habitually cold and earthward in our feelings, the heart is to be warmed and lifted to Heaven. In a word, man—imperfect, erring, tempted, sinning man, is to fit himself by his own efforts, by the effectual suppression and subjection of what is evil in his nature, and the careful rearing and perfecting of that which is good, for a joyful inheritance of that glorious immortality that has through the mercy of God been promised. And is this a work, considered in any of its relations and aspects, that can be thought an easy one, and be safely deferred to a more convenient season? Does it look as if it could spare any of the time which God in his mercy allows us? Is it so light a task, that a day, or an hour, or the remnant minutes of a wasted life will suffice for it? Truly, if we reflect upon the circumstances of difficulty, which beset this whole business, the extreme reluctance with which many persons are brought to think of it at all, the slowness and heaviness of spirit with which they move in the work if they do enter upon it, the many times they go wholly back to where they first started from, the hesitancy, lukewarmness, temporising, that accompany them all the way through, if we think of the influence of the world, the claims of business, and pleasure, and folly, of friends, family, and society, the necessary calls of industry, and the unnecessary and artificial ones of custom and fashion, of the large draughts that sickness, pain, uneasy sensations, trifling and foolish thoughts, and unavoidable inter-

raptions make on the time and spirit, — if we think of these things, we shall say and believe, that with these hindrances and difficulties and the nature of the work combined, a day from the longest life God ever gives can be but ill spared, and that he were twice a fool, who, if in his heart he wished to do this work, postponed for a single hour so urgent and mighty a task, which, if he were to give to it his whole strength and undivided soul, he could scarce in the longest life hope thoroughly to accomplish. Oh, what amazing stupidity is there in most of us, to think, knowing as we do what the gospel and reason both demand of us to be happy hereafter, that we can doze on through today, and tomorrow, and the next week, and for another month, and another year, and that then, time enough will be left to rouse up, and clear our eyes, and stretch our limbs, and begin the race. If there is not a single post of duty or honor upon earth, in the whole circle of human affairs, from which a man would not be spurned with reproaches and contempt, if he should be chargeable with one half the incorrigible dulness and unwillingness of which he is so often guilty in the things that relate to his final salvation, what, I would ask in all seriousness, can we reasonably look for at last at the hands of a just God, but shame and exclusion, in that we have trodden under foot in our indolence, or sin, or mad devotion to other things, the promises of eternity ?

2. Again, count not upon this tomorrow, depend not upon it, defer not thy work to it, for it may never come.

Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth ; and it may bring forth death as well as life, pain and sickness and lassitude and imbecility as well as vigor and strength

and new returns of health. The dispositions, and purposes, and resolves, and aspirations of tomorrow—supposing it to come—may be as weak, and earthward, and transient as those of today. Why not? What is this charm and promise that hangs about tomorrow, that it should take all the worth and honor of life to itself? Who has told us, that it is possessed of such strange virtues, and abounds with such potent and blessed influences, that the moment it has dawned all the darkness of our minds will be dispelled, our inglorious sloth will change to christian zeal, and all the clouds of doubt and error and fear will clear away? But more than this; and first of all, what right have we to reckon on the future? The arrows of death are flying thick through the air; they are striking down on every side those who were, or seemed to be, of as fair promise as ourselves, and how can we tell that we may not be the very next victims? Others, we see, are taken off in the confusion of sudden fear and an imperfect preparation,—their hands but just applied to their task, their first prayer just leaving their lips, in the beginning of their new life,— or else in the very heat and pollution of their vices, in the folly of a raging passion, or the impurity of a crying sin, or in the midst of their drunken revels and low debaucheries, without a moment's warning to bring the spirit into a posture of calmness and decency, befitting its awful state and its approaching change. And if others are thus dealt with, why not we? Has a statute of exemption been taken out? Are we privileged and safe, where the rest are exposed to a common danger? If we are not, as reason tell us we are not, let us not live and act as if we were. Let us not be so mad, as to stake on the contingency of

tomorrow, or a following day, or even another year, the infinite concernments of futurity.

But suppose we are spared till tomorrow—suppose we have reached that late period of life, to which we deferred the work of religion, at which we have resolved to repent, and get the better of our sins, and give ourselves for the remainder of our days to God and to the calm and holy duties of a religious preparation;—suppose we have reached this period, and our good purposes hold out, what have we gained? I believe you will say, nothing has been gained, and the loss has been great. For,

3. In the next place, the work which we have to do increases in difficulty, in proportion as it is delayed.

It is notorious, and too plain to need anything more than a passing illustration, that they who have put off the task of repentance and religious preparation, have increased the difficulty of doing what they intend ultimately to do, with every day that has been added to their lives. We are subject to the same laws in the acquisition of virtue or religion, as of other things. They who have been brought up in ignorance, when on arriving at maturity—ashamed of, or lamenting their deficiencies—they give themselves to the task of recovering lost time, find the task heavy, and the labor insupportable; for the mind through long disuse has become dull and unapt to learn, and the thoughts, unaccustomed to restraint and the narrow confinement of a single study, grow weary and wander away to the ends of the earth; and to one learning at that advanced and unnatural age, the elements of knowledge are burdensome beyond endurance, and are dismissed as unattainable. And so of any bodily art and

any intellectual science. But the operation of this law is even more distinctly and fatally visible in morals and religion. If the studies proper to youth become wearisome and cannot so much as be attempted in age, so in morals and religion those habits of virtue or religion, which were hated or resisted in the days of youth and manhood, cannot be acquired in the later periods of life, or with the difficulties of the task greatly increased. If you see a man in old age striving to perform the feats of youth—sitting down to a daily task—aiming to recover by a severe discipline the worldly accomplishments which were neglected when young, you behold but a feeble image of him, who has grown gray in the service of sin, aiming on the sudden to love and cultivate habits of virtuous thought and action, and to find in heavenly contemplations and the love of God that joy and repose, so needful under the privations and weaknesses of the closing years of life.

When a man defers the labor and duty of repentance from day to day and from year to year, he little thinks how he is arming with new means of resistance the foe, with whom he still purposes one day to contend. When a man simply postpones his more religious purposes, when, living a life of religious indifference and insensibility, he yet determines at some future time to rouse up to the love of virtue and excellence, and aspire after a likeness to the children of God, and in the meantime plods on in the same old way of religious apathy and unconcern, waiting for a convenient season, he too little considers that by the course he takes, every day resolving, and every day breaking his resolutions, he is hardening his heart and blunting his sensibilities, so that by

the time old age arrives he will find himself wholly indisposed to, as well as incapable of, the long deferred duty. But however little these things may be considered, they are fatally true, and in this view the danger of delay cannot be overrated. He who thus reckons on tomorrow is treasuring up for himself inevitable and bitter disappointment; he is relying on that which will deceive him with the treachery of a rotten staff. He who imagines that the future will find him better disposed to do a disagreeable and painful duty than the present, is like one, who thinks that the pain of an amputation will be less tomorrow than today, and so defers it, while the disease gathers head by the delay. What reason can the sinner find to convince him, that sin will grow more hateful when the sun has once more risen and set, or has done so twenty times, than it is now? And what shall occur tomorrow to give vigor to those resolves, which today are weaker than the purposes of a child? Only let him for one moment remember the past and its experiences, its long series of irresolute acts and transient resolutions, and he will feel that all such reliances on the future are delusions to lure him on in the way that leadeth unto death. He will feel that the sinful habits, which youth rooted deep in the soul, are not so easily thrown off and subdued. Alas! what habits are like those of sin, for strength? what bonds like the bonds of sensual indulgence? what fetters and manacles like the soft and silken ones of pleasure? Who is known to escape from them, that has lain bound a willing slave, drunk in pleasure, dissolved in effeminacy, till age has once crept over his frame and sent its feebleness into the mind? What tomorrow of hope is there to such a one? He may indeed weep and bemoan his sad

captivity, and wish in his heart that he were free; but his moral force is all gone out of him, and while he loathes and detests them, he hugs the chains that bind him, and twines them round and round his dishonorable limbs. And though by a mad and desperate effort, in the sudden energy of a virtuous purpose, he may for an instant leap clear of his shackles, he is soon seen, the fire of sin unquenched in his eye, hasting back to the beloved haunts of forbidden joys, and fitting to his limbs one by one the fetters he had so lately broken in pieces. Consider the drunkard, the sensualist, the debauchee, look into their lives, and confess that their progress and their fate are like this. Where shall we search for the reformed rake, the reclaimed libertine, the cleansed and purified sot? Who has found their taste to be refined and exalted by age? When has it happened, that, oppressed by the imbecilities of a premature old age, they have then taken upon themselves the toils of virtue and died its sincere votaries? Let us believe then, if we are content to abide by the truth, that the task which we have to perform increases in difficulty with the degree in which we postpone it, that sin gathers strength and winds about us its cords the closer, the longer we continue in her service, that the life of religion appears the more irksome and hateful the longer we hesitate to begin it, and if old age still find us in sin, that the duties of that life will become impracticable. Today, then, if ye will hear the voice that cries to you, harden not your hearts; but open them, lay them bare to the influences of the Gospel. Think of the issues that hang on the present life; remember that each one for himself, through the blessing of God, is the founder and builder of his salvation. Let it not then be

owing to delay, to stupid procrastination, that you should fail to insure it.

4. Defer not till tomorrow—because from the very nature of virtue or religion, consisting as it does in established habits, fixed dispositions and biases of the soul, a very long time is requisite for its growth and maturity, and the least delay may be attended by fatal consequences. True religion or virtue, when it reigns within as it ought, has the whole circle of the desires, affections, appetites, passions subject without the feeblest show of resistance to its strictest laws. All man's habits are then right, all his emotions holy, all his thoughts pure and heavenward. So supreme is his regard for the will of God, so exalted his reverence of his own nature, that none of the temptations of life have power to lead him into sin. He obeys not from constraint but through love. Virtue is his happiness. He has so disciplined his nature, so denied and subdued the sensual tendencies of his frame, that an unruffled calm reigns in his soul, which no motions of sin ever disturb. Such is virtue or religion. And is it the work of a day? Does this universal subjection of the man to the control of the very highest principles of conduct and of thought, imply a moral toil of light import, which can be gone through at a moment's or a day's notice—especially when we take into view the amazing strength of human passion, and circumstances of danger and difficulty into which men are so often thrown? If such is religion, can it come in obedience to a few earnest desires? Will a few wishes obtain it? Will it come in answer to a prayer? Will tears buy it? Can groanings purchase it? Will a whole life of indo-

lent musing insure it? Will raptures, or ecstasies, or frantic cries, or tumultuous emotions, give us warrant of it? Not in the least—not in the least, you will say. *Then*, it might be left till tomorrow. *Then*, a day or an hour might be more than enough for its most perfect attainment. We might give today and tomorrow to pleasure, and the world, and our lusts, and count upon some future and remote hour, and feel safe, though the work were deferred to our dying bed. For that which consists in a simple emotion, or act of the mind, can be accomplished in a moment as well as in a life, in sickness as well as in health, on the bed of death as well as in the active scenes of life and duty. But if religion is not of this nature, if it is what it has just been described to be, then the delay which shall postpone the commencement of so great and desirable a work, so much as another day, may be fatal to us.

If, for instance, our hostility to virtue is great, and our desires are wayward, and our minds sensual, and our affections earthly and depraved, the labor and time necessary for our conversion in all these particulars will be great; a whole life of earnest and undivided effort—with some natures—may not be enough to insure and complete it. How dangerous to put off the beginning of the work from day to day and year to year, as multitudes of the world so thoughtlessly and madly do? Even if the work of religion in our case be much easier than this, suppose we are only cold and indifferent, not given to vice, but not in love with virtue, not the votaries of excess and slaves to sin, but not stretching on toward perfection, not lovers of God, willing to go through the world in a course of dull and sluggish obedience, as if we wished

merely to escape by this middle path some great and threatened evil; suppose this is our case, and we are at length awakened to a sense of its danger, and desire with the whole soul to begin the work of life; is *this* either the work of a day, the easy labor of a few months or years even? And could he be wise, who with a solemn purpose of salvation in his heart, should dare to put it off till to-morrow, or a more convenient season?

5. Postpone not the work of religion or virtue till tomorrow, or some uncertain future time, because it may then lose its value.

What *can* be the worth of that surrender of the mind to God, which is deferred to the last possible hour?

If we would know what value to put upon the service of a friend or servant, which after a long and vexatious delay he has at length done for us, or tried to do, we must know the reasons of his delay. If we would appreciate the value of a son's obedience, of his return to duty, we must know why he went astray, and why at length, after long indulgence in riotous living, he comes back to his father's house. And so in religion, and in relation to the eternal happiness of the soul, if we would know the precise value in the sight of God of that devotion to him and his will, which, after long delays and much backwardness and reluctance, we do at length in the decline of life and decay of nature see fit to render him, we must inquire honestly and severely, why it was so long deferred, why so many years were given to sin, and why it is that the remaining few are so anxiously and tremblingly given to God.

It may not be positively affirmed, that the work which

has been deferred to the last, will in every instance be rejected as valueless; God is merciful, and the reasons of delay, if not valid ones, may yet be of some weight as arguments of extenuation. But it may be said, and we cannot help thinking that it will prove so, that the vast proportion of those who either sleep during these precious hours of labor, or give themselves to pleasure and sin, or in the midst of a busy life forget the soul and its Maker, when they at last, in the closing scene of life, rouse up, and bethink themselves, and begin in haste to do this great and then accumulated task, will find that they are too late, that the chance is gone, the opportunity has slipped away, the day is spent, the night at hand, and there remains nothing for them at the best but the tremblings of fear, and the agonies of doubt.

Yet there may be reasons, which shall satisfactorily account for the delay of the work of religion and the soul's late approach to God. They, for example, who do not early know their duty as religious beings, cannot of course do it early, or it may be no wonder and no fault that it is delayed to a late hour. "How," says an apostle, "shall they call on him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ?" And there may be many standing in this predicament—of an unavoidable ignorance of God and their duty—beside those who literally live beyond the sound of the gospel. The Heathen have not heard the sound of the gospel, for it has not gone out to them. But there are many within the reach of our hands, if we will stretch them out, as ignorant of God and the provisions of grace in his Son, as they who live by Nile and Ganges—and

little, if at all, more blameable for that ignorance. Consider the miserable wretches, who fill the cellars and the garrets in all the lanes and alleys of a large city, who first drew their breath in those sad abodes, and hearing and knowing nothing of God, and having no examples before them but those of fraud, and violence, and profaneness, and impiety, grew up from their infancy in the love and relish of sin, and reached a full blown maturity in it, before ever one thought went upward to the Creator, or there was a single consideration started in the soul about its value and destination; consider the multitudes throughout Christian nations and communities, who endure the privations of an extreme poverty, brought upon them by the force of circumstances and the inscrutable appointment of Providence, or by an early imprudence and improvidence inherited from parents worse than themselves; consider all these, and their imperfect opportunities of arriving at a knowledge of the nature and demands of religion, and we may believe, that the mercies of God will be large enough to receive and own them, though at the very last hour they should cast themselves down at his footstool in the sorrows and prayers of a heart-breaking repentance. These are they, who in the midst of an ignorant, a thoughtless, a dissolute life, roused by some fearful providence, are suddenly converted from their wicked ways; have their minds opened to new views of life and the purposes of God, and give themselves to him in a ready and sincere service. These are they, who even at the last hour of life, having then first of all a knowledge of divine things spread out before them, do on the instant eagerly embrace it, weeping that the golden opportunity had not sooner been offered, and showing that had it

been, it would have been gladly seized. These are they, who turning to God for the first time on their dying beds, may hope to find in him a compassionate judge.

But let not this afford encouragement to the sinner, who has long and wilfully persevered in the way, which he was a thousand times told, and himself knew, would end in death. They who live in the knowledge and enjoyment of christian truth their lives long, and sabbath after sabbath hear the great points of religion and duty stated from the oracles of God, and are long purposing a good life, but never find an hour for anything but worldliness and sin, and are thus at last surprised and taken off to their account in the terrors of an unprepared state, cannot, on grounds of reason or of scripture, hope for the mercy extended to the others. These are among the habitual slighters and despisers of the word and will of God, and for them nothing remains but a fearful looking for of judgment. Virtue and acceptance lie in listening to and embracing the salvation as soon as proffered, whether early or late. This shows the child of God and the dispositions of Heaven. But for those who have always known of the nature and obligations of religion, have always basked beneath the light of two revelations, but have not thought it worth their while to turn their thoughts to such subjects, have cast from them their present consideration, thinking that there will be time enough at the end of life to answer all the claims of religion, and that in the mean time they will keep on in the way of sin—it is not easy to see what room for repentance there can be in their case. They who thus deliberately, and on set purpose, as it were, put off the duties and acts

of the religious life, and would never do them at all if they could be safely avoided, have placed themselves among those who are farthest from the kingdom of God, against whom the door is shut. It is mournful to think how large a proportion these constitute of the nominally religious. For let all those, in a christian community, who are hating and putting far from them a religious life, ask themselves why it is they do so, and they will find that it is not because they are ignorant of God's will, but because they secretly purpose at last to change their character and conduct, to repent before they die, and thus make an atonement for the evil they have done. Repentance at last they imagine will be cheerfully accepted, and will wipe out all the guilt of the past. But they, who go on sinning in this intention by and by to repent, are they who never can repent. "The very intention is a fraud; instead of being the parent of true repentance, it is itself to be repented of bitterly."*

If all, who turned to God at last, were such as had at the last hour of life their first knowledge of God and his acquirements, then might all be received. But multitudes of those, who turn to him at the end of life, are those who do so under far less worthy circumstances, so that the value of that religion which they at length offer is nothing or but little. What are some of those circumstances of delay which go so far to deprive repentance and religion of their value?

When men grow religious through fear, their late return to God through the influence of that motive has lost its value. Such men will live without religion as long as they

* Paley.

dare, and then, when they think that their days are nearly numbered, and the patience of God, which they have tried to the utmost, well nigh exhausted, and their case is almost desperate, they begin to look to their souls' concerns and betake themselves to their prayers and the other holy duties, which are, as they fondly believe, in a few months or days or hours to prepare them for heaven. One man you will see giving all the strength of his powers to the world and self-indulgence and the pursuits of interest or sin, putting far from him, as a hateful thing, the love and service of God, till God sends a messenger to him in the shape of a deadly malady, or nature is worn out and ready to drop in pieces, and then, that the world is passing away from him and all that remains for him is death and its consequences,—then you see him in haste to dedicate himself to God; then he would not for the world delay an hour to begin his preparation for eternity; the terrors of death are gotten hold upon him, and he flies to God whom he dreads, and to the doctrines and ministers of his religion which he has ever despised, for succor and deliverance; and in the folly of a miserable delusion persuades himself, that he shall not be abandoned to the darkness and death of that pit he has digged for himself and cast himself into. But can you think very highly of a religion like this? Has it anything sound or worthy or pure in it? Can you suppose it will avail anything? And is it not almost past belief, that men—and in other things reasonable and wise men—should come to be so besotted in what relates to their souls, as to think that God will accept in them, and count to them for righteousness, that conduct, of which if the counterpart were manifested toward them by their equals or depend-

ants in the petty concerns of life, they would spurn and reject it with indignation for its utter baseness and ingratitude and presumptuousness? Such converts as these are no converts. These are not they who are received at the eleventh hour. These are they, who, we should suppose, reasoning from analogy and scripture, would be received at no hour. For they are no fitter for heaven, by any preparation which in an hour, a day, or a month they *can* have made for it, than they were before their repentance began. No virtue has been seated in the soul. No length of days and of trial has shown them to be immoveable in the rooted accomplishments of the Christian. This were impossible. Their christian and heavenly practice has confessedly been nothing. And as for their dispositions, they are of no more value. They are like the sorrows of a man that he has been a thief or a murderer, who is then for the first time sorry, when the judge utters his sentence of condemnation, or he stands upon the scaffold and the executioner is fitting to him the instrument of a shameful death. He bewails the unhappy issue of his bad life, and he is sorry therefore that he lived it; he fears to die in agony, and in that proportion is he sorry for his crimes. But the chance is many times more than equal, that if he were saved from the death, he would go back again to his old practices. We know it to be so very often in regard to those who suffer the lesser punishments of the law, imprisonments and other penalties. When the punishment is withdrawn, their sorrow, if they felt any, stops, and they fall again into their former courses. And so the sinner, who repents at last wholly through fear,—because death stares him in the face,—may not feel any confidence, that were the threat-

ened sentence suspended, he would not sink back into the pollution of his former vices.

What, then, is the intrinsic value, and the acceptableness with God, of that religion, that virtue, that repentance, to which we have resorted through fear? I presume to believe, that we all feel that they have no value at all, or none which can be estimated. The only rule we have to go by in the case is against its being worth anything. The son, the friend, the servant, the prisoner, who repents under the influence of fear, and acts well for a time under its felt restraints, we cannot and do not trust. He must act well for a long period *with this motive withdrawn*, before he can be trusted. But in the case of the sinner, with the fear of death before him, this withdrawal is not supposable or possible; he *dies* in this fear; and who will dare to believe in, or trust to the sincerity and worth of such repentance? It may indeed have that value, which sorrow for sin always has. But it can have no more. And we know from experience how little that is apt to be.

There is one other circumstance which tends greatly to deprive a late surrender of the soul to God of its value; which is, that it may have been put off till temptation has lost its power, sin its charms, virtue its difficulty, and the mind turns to virtue and heaven, not because it loves them, but because its old and long accustomed pleasures have ceased to give any satisfactions, through the exhaustion and decay both of body and mind.

Yet it must not be inferred, that there cannot be virtue without great difficulties to meet and overcome. Difficulty increases the lustre of virtue, but is not essential to it. Many, there cannot be a doubt, pass through life

with natures so calm and even, that they accomplish the work of life well and with ease. They feel few temptations to vice. They live in pureness on earth, and then, when the end comes, they are fit for their translation. The virtue of such has all the value their nature admits of, and all, therefore, that will be exacted. It would not weigh in equal balance with that, which has overcome bitter and unremitting opposition from nature within and circumstances without. The virtue must ever be most exalted, that has most to contend with; which is saved, yet as by fire.

The noblest offering, accordingly, which religion ever receives, or that is laid upon the altar of God, is when, in the words of the Apostle, "the body is presented a *living* sacrifice, holy and acceptable before God"—not after it has become dull and dead through the imbecilities of age, or incapacitated both for virtue and vice by disease and decay,—but when it is full of the high flush and fiery spirits of youth and manhood, when the passions and desires are in their strength, when the by-paths of sin seem full of tempting pleasures and strewn with flowers, and it *implies* something that these forms of sin are withstood, these strong and impetuous desires are denied and restrained, and the soul surrendered to God in a severe and constant obedience. This is the purest and noblest offering religion ever receives, and when it is this that we bear up the steps of the altar, it is better than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices, better than all faith, and penance, and pilgrimages, and the whole catalogue of those painful services which superstition ever pays.

But how different from this the sacrifice which they

offer, whose principle it has been to put off till tomorrow, and the latest period possible, the work in which religion and virtue consist. What weakness, what presumption, or what hardihood in man, to suppose that after the energy and enthusiasm of his being have been consecrated to sin and worldliness, God will accept those spiritless and imperfect services, those dull and wearisome hours, extorted by fear, which he shall at last choose to present to him. See if it be not so. One man, we will suppose, is, during the busy periods of life, and while all his powers are bright and vigorous, devoted to the pursuit of wealth —innocently pursued, an innocent pursuit. But, unwilling to regard himself as a religious being, casting away from his mind every idea of accountableness, he is not scrupulous as to the means by which he secures his end. He secures it, and rolls in wealth. Toward the end, or past the middle of his days, he thinks it would be well, seeing the present life must soon end, to look after the interests of futurity. And now, that for the first time he reflects upon himself and what he has been doing, he is amazed at his folly and struck dumb in the recollection of his wrong deeds and his ungodly life. Now that the *desire* of wrong doing has passed away, and *that* has been secured for which it was resorted to, he begins to repent of it. Now that the temptation to his besetting sin is removed, he can abjure it and resolve to be virtuous. But, can he feel sure that if fortune had not so soon favored him, extreme old age or death itself—as our observation of life shows often to be the case—would not have surprised him still practising the same dishonesties and oppressions? And can he feel much confidence or comfort in his present virtuous purposes, in his present

devout frame? Is not the value of such late and forced religion exceedingly little in every view of the case? Does not the absence of temptation and difficulty divest this return of the soul to God of all, that clothes a voluntary, cheerful and arduous virtue with the splendors of heaven, and gives it the earnest of an eternal recompense?

And so with those who have been the slaves of sensual indulgences. What can be the worth, or sincerity even, of that repentance which is offered to God, not till after the cup of pleasure has been drained and its dregs are found to be distasteful and bitter; not till the course of sin has been run, and weariness and satiety have succeeded; not till every wicked and worldly desire throughout a long life has been unhesitatingly gratified, and the soul, then jaded and worn out, its passions dead, its desires asleep, thinks to give itself to virtue and God, and now that earth can no longer be enjoyed, make the best preparation it can for heaven? But is this anything? Is it anything to love virtue, when vice is no longer tempting? To deny an appetite, when it no longer solicits? To live temperately, when the palate has lost its relish? To give yourself to contemplation and devotion, when decrepitude ties you to your seat? To turn from the world, when the world has first turned from you; and when the strength and vigor of life have been given to sin, to devote the few remaining days of weakness and fear, when you can do nothing else, to piety and penitence?

Let us not then wickedly reckon upon tomorrow. Let us not defer to the last hour of a life devoted to the very opposite objects and pursuits, the work of heaven's reparation. If our previous life had thrown no addi-

tional obstacles in the way, it would be wholly chimerical to think of cultivating and rooting in a few months, or days, or years, at the end of life, the difficult habits of a universal Christian virtue. But with the evil habits and biasses of three or four score years first to contend with, to unsettle and eradicate, and then the further task of creating in the soul a disinterested and lofty love of what for so long a period it has hated—this seems wholly impracticable; or at least demands the strength of a moral Hercules; and few therefore may be supposed equal to its accomplishment.

Let us try to save ourselves from the delusions, that are so apt to mislead and ruin us in relation to this whole subject. Men seem obstinately bent on the belief, that they may live as they please the first part of their lives, and that by and by, when they come to die, will be time enough to repent. They will sin on through life, or at least live without God in the world, and then in the end as an atonement, they will be sorry for it, beg pardon of the Being whom they have offended, and drown themselves in the tears of penitence; going on the vulgar idea, that their habits and propensities and tastes will change with their desires and their wishes, and that religion consists in a series of emotions and feelings which may be had at the latest hour, instead of fixed habits, settled dispositions, voluntary preferences; not considering too, that if they have lived in opposition to God's will and their own convictions of duty *here*, there can be no reason why they should not persevere in the same course, and prefer it too, if God should permit them to live again and afford them further opportunities of improvement. This is an awful consideration to him who

dies without established habits of virtue, without a reigning desire to obey God, namely, that he may experience the same dislike of such habits hereafter as now, and then, supposing it to go on so, what shall become of him ?

Pity is it that we cannot bring ourselves to believe, what is so fatally true, that we shall feel the same indisposition to be virtuous and deny our lusts tomorrow that we feel today, and the succeeding day as tomorrow, and ten years hence as now. It is ever tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, or, on my next birth day or, the beginning of the next year ; and when those days come, there is the same backwardness in the soul to do this great and pressing work, and it is again deferred. "Now is the accepted time and the day of salvation." The true Christian knows not of tomorrow. He does not acknowlege it in his calendar of time. It is the grave of holy resolves and good purposes, the doomsday of the soul, and he abjures it.

Let us not count on tomorrow, nor rely upon its opportunities. Its offers, like those of a false friend, are fair, exceeding fair ; but they are treacherous, and will fail us in our need. The work of religion, if it ever begin, begins today—never on the morrow.

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BY F. W. P. GREENWOOD.

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This Tract was delivered as the Annual Discourse before the Society for promoting Theological Education in Harvard College on Sunday Evening, January 3, 1830. The Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association obtained the permission of the writer, and of the Directors of the Society, to publish it in their series, being anxious to give the widest possible circulation to the statements and arguments, by which 'the great religious charity of the day,' is here recommended to attention.

CAMBRIDGE DIVINITY SCHOOL.

All those who are interested in the great subject of theological instruction, may be supposed to feel some solicitude with regard to its character, and some preference for one kind over another.

Among the numerous sects into which the religious community is divided, it is not difficult to discern some great dividing lines which mark off the district into less and larger portions. According as they are convinced or disposed, most people take their stand on one side or the other of these general lines, and their views of almost all topics connected with religion are characterized by their respective localities. The creeds adopted by those who dwell in one of these territories, though differing from each other in perhaps many points, will all bear the same broad and distinctive features of a common resemblance; while the creeds of their neighbors of the opposite tract, with similar minor disagreements among themselves, will have a similar family likeness; and these two sets of creeds will be as unlike, each to each, as could be conceived possible, when we consider that both claim the same original, and refer to the same law and testimony. The general opinions always, and the minute and particular opinions often, which men pefer and adopt, they naturally wish to have inculcated by teachers who are in

every way qualified to recommend and enforce them. Such a desire is the cause of the favor, patronage and support which are extended by different bodies of christian believers to different schools and institutions in which theological instruction is afforded to those, who in their turn are to instruct others. A restricted and exclusive institution, furnished with professors who stand on an exclusive creed, and who very probably are chained down to it, is favored by those who love and embrace an exclusive system of religion; and an institution which is more free in its character, will naturally be preferred by those whose faith is free, and whose charity is comprehensive.

It will be my endeavor, on this occasion, to describe the general features of that theology which many of our most enlightened and excellent citizens throughout the country, and especially in this portion of it, prefer, from honest conviction, and the dissemination of which is demanded by the state of religious parties among us, and the condition of the public mind, and demanded, as I believe, with a louder and louder call every day. In portraying these features, I am persuaded that I shall delineate such a theology as was in the mind, and heart, and purpose of those who first united to promote Christian education in Harvard University. It is such a theology, too, as is longed and panted after by thousands of our brethren, who are so scattered abroad in our land that they cannot unite, and who must therefore be satisfied to possess and cherish the solitary truth, as they can, each in his individual bosom. It is such a theology, too, as is the real object of the dim vision, and uncertain desire, and inexpressible want of thousands more, who, wearied and repelled by the strange forms of Christianity which are

constantly presented to them, know not where to turn for their soul's good, and at last give up the search in indifference or despair.

1. The first characteristic of this theology, which I shall mention, is *liberality*, in the purest sense of that word. This is indispensable. It is the necessary demand of every free and enlarged spirit. A cry and a prayer is everywhere going up, from the midst of narrow, confining, choking schemes of religion, for a liberal theology. And by a liberal, I mean a *free* and *generous* theology; free in opposition to a timid and creed-bound, and generous, in opposition to an exclusive, opprobrious and arrogant theology. It is not the variety of opinions which have been drawn from the same recognized faith, nor the number of sects into which the church universal has been partitioned, which have been injurious to the christian cause, so much as the manner in which those opinions have been maintained, and the outrageous pretensions which those sects have, with hardly an exception, advanced. There has been a constant devotion to names, and a constant slavery to prescribed doctrines. Men have risen up from time to time, who, either by extraordinary fanaticism, or great genius united with great boldness and management, have gained a mighty ascendency over multitudes, and have fastened their own notions and expositions, and in many cases their own names, round the necks of generations, who have gone on, one after another, for the most part, not only willing but proud to wear the signs and badges of their servitude.

The lovers of a free or liberal theology, feel it impossible that they could submit to any such dominion. They know it to be not in the nature of things, that any man

can be worthy of all this deference, or can be entitled to have his opinions respected and adopted as infallible interpretations of an infallible law. They know of no mere man who ever lived, by whose name they would be willing to be called, or whose implicit disciples they would be willing to be considered. They refuse the name of Socinus with as much promptness as they would the name of Calvin; not because they are afraid of being thought to hold those opinions of Socinus which have been generally accounted obnoxious, but because they conceive no man to be worthy of the honor which they render to Christ alone, and because they will not bind themselves, nor suffer themselves to be bound, by the adoption of any man's name, to become in any degree responsible for his character or sentiments, subservient to his views, or obedient to his dictates. The submission which they will not yield to one man, they will not yield to any one body of men. They feel that they cannot and must not surrender the birthright of their mental and religious freedom to one or to many, to a name, or a church, or a catechism, but that they must keep their minds open at all hours to receive fresh air and new light, and in a position to profit readily and unrestrainedly by the result of any examination. Entertaining such views as these of the sacredness of religious freedom, they would never call on the instructers of a school of theology to subscribe allegiance to a long list of doctrines, but would rather select those men for teachers, who, wise, honest, and competent, would refuse bondage even as they themselves would refuse it.

A liberal theology is generous as well as free. It will no more attempt to enslave, than it will submit to be

enslaved. It allows all christian privileges to all christian men, and it acknowledges as christian men all who seriously take the name of Christ, hearken to his instructions, and consider themselves amenable to his laws. It does not take a particular form of doctrine, and place it on a pedestal, and proclaim, 'This is the golden image; fall down and worship it, or be cast into the fiery furnace.' It reveres truth; it entertains its own views of what truth is, and it would have all men come to the knowledge of it: but it would effect this by invitation and not denunciation; by persuading men to examine, leaving them free to choose, and granting to each one his perfect right to his own determination, and his perfect safety in it, if he has come to it in a proper temper and by a just use of all his means. It regards spiritual pride and arrogance as worse than false doctrine, and as the prolific seed of heresies and schisms and infidelity. Exclusiveness is its utter aversion. Exclusive Christianity is its unspeakable wonder. It regards exclusive religion as quite as great a contradiction as an exclusive God. Is it not as great a contradiction? What is there exclusive in the divine government? Does He not send down the sunlight liberally? Is not the sky liberal in its influences, the clouds in their showers, the earth in its products? Is not the great Father bountiful to all, and merciful to all? Shall we never look up to his everlasting ways, and take a lesson there, and be taught that the operations of his government and the words of his revealed law must harmonize? Shall we never understand that the God who is not exclusive in his works, cannot be exclusive in his grace? And shall we be perpetually setting our-

selves up, in our ignorance and littleness, to refuse that mercy and that generous confidence to our brethren which God has not refused, and fixing terms of communion, and uttering sentences of excommunication which he has never fixed nor sanctioned? They who love a liberal theology, and desire to promote a liberal Christianity, which under any form of doctrine, can be, at last, the only consistent Christianity, do not pretend to conceal their dislike and opposition to all such narrowness, exclusiveness, and presumption in religion. They deplore it as the disgrace and bane of the pure and gentle and generous faith of Christ. They point it out as a thing to be avoided, to be resisted, to be condemned. In all right and lawful ways, by reason, by scripture, by speaking, by writing, by example, they would expose it and extirpate it.

In this work of emancipation and regeneration, they are often met by the charge that they are illiberal in their very liberality. It has indeed become a not uncommon saying, originated by the exclusive to excuse their exclusiveness, and repeated by the indifferent to excuse their indifference, that they who would be esteemed and entitled liberal Christians are quite as apt to be illiberal as those who are exclusive. We say that this is an impossible thing. We say, that for those who maintain and cherish free and generous principles, to be as illiberal, in the mass, as those who hold and act upon exclusive principles, is a natural impossibility. We deny not that among those who call themselves liberal, there may be some who are illiberal; but it must be because of their ignorance of the principles they profess. We deny not that all who call themselves liberal may be, occasionally, and unintentionally illiberal; but this must be on account

of human imperfection. We do deny that occasional illiberality, which is against professed principle, is to be confounded with systematic and habitual illiberality which is in accordance with professed principle ; and, though the illiberality of the liberal may be more glaring, and, if you please, more criminal, than that of the exclusive, we deny that it can be dangerous or in any great degree prevalent, because principle, acknowledged principle, will always be in array against it, and will finally triumph over it.

There is another thing that we deny; which is, that to brand exclusiveness as illiberal and unchristian, to expose it, and to make all fair exertions against it, is any proof or sign at all of illiberality. And yet this is the most common foundation of the charge of illiberality which is brought against us. On such a foundation no sensible person, certainly, who would take two moments to reflect, would venture to lay such a charge. But we will briefly and calmly answer to it, that to say of exclusive principles, that they have exclusive tendencies, appears to us no more than a natural and just use of language; and that to say of exclusive tendencies that they often will and do result in illiberal effects, is no more than what is evident from palpable facts. There is religious exclusiveness in the world, or there is not. Nothing is plainer than that the world is full of it. Close communion, fencing of tables, the denial of the christian name, christian rights, and christian sympathy to those who acknowledge the divine authority of Christ, are only so many developments of the spirit and principle of exclusiveness. To notice these and other instances of exclusiveness, which are all about us, wherever we turn,

is but the telling of simple and obvious truth. To call them unchristian and irreligious, and baneful to the interests of real Christianity and real religion, is but the telling of another simple and obvious truth; and to discountenance them, to exhibit them in their odious colors and destructive influences, and to use all proper exertions to banish them from the church, is but the doing of a sacrilegious duty, and is no more illiberal, than to perform any other duty is illiberal. We cannot but think it strange, therefore, that to term exclusiveness, illiberal and pernicious, is to subject us to the charge of illiberality.

There is, we believe, another very common misapprehension of the temper and views of liberal Christians. It is thought to be an act of assumption in any body of men to take to themselves the title of liberal, as if they were the only liberal Christians in the world. We are convinced that there must be some great mistake on this subject. We do not see how they, who maintain liberal principles of Christianity, are guilty of any unwarrantable assumption in calling themselves liberal Christians. And with regard to their monopoly of the name, it ought to be distinctly understood, that they do not intend to confine it by any other limits than are fixed by the signification of the word itself, and that they always stand ready to receive all as liberal Christians, whatever may be their denomination or country, whether they are Trinitarians or Unitarians, orthodox or heterodox, who cherish liberal, which is to say, free and generous views of the religion of Christ.

2. I have stated that one of the principal features of the theology which I have undertaken to describe, is

liberality, and I have explained the sense in which the term is to be understood, and defended it against some common misapprehensions. I will now go on to designate that theology as a *serious* and practical theology. Other kinds of theology may be more sad, disheartening, melancholy, and terrific, but none can be more serious; for seriousness is not gloom. It is a theology which inculcates deeply serious and reverential views of God, the infinite, the unapproachable, the author of all being, and of all good. It inculcates serious views of his son Jesus Christ, the pure, the disinterested, the holy, the beloved of God, and the teacher and redeemer of men. It inculcates serious views of human nature; serious views of its dignity, its destination, and responsibility, as well as of its imperfection, its dependence, its sinfulness, its need of direction, of support, of forgiveness. It inculcates serious views of the Scriptures, of God's assistance, providence, and grace; serious views of duty; serious views of life; serious views of death; serious views of judgment and eternity. I have noticed above some misapprehensions concerning the first named characteristic of this theology. But I would now say, that no misapprehension of it is half so great, as the idea that it may be a light, a careless, a licentious system. It is liberal—it is free; but free from the dictation of man, not from the fear and obedience of God. It spurns the imposition of human creeds, but it kneels before the revelations of divine truth. It bows to the authority of reason, and is therefore rational. It bows to the authority of the Scriptures, and is therefore scriptural. It regards God as the source both of reason and revelation, and as directly the source of one as of the other. When therefore a doctrine is

represented to it as a doctrine of Scripture, at which reason demurs or is offended, it examines that doctrine, and if it cannot be fairly explained to the acquiescence of reason, it either refuses its belief, or suspends it; for it is sure that reason and revelation cannot be decidedly at variance. But to all undoubted revelation it gives its sincere and unqualified reverence; and holding that nothing is more clearly revealed in Scripture, or fully confirmed by reason, than the necessity of loving and serving the great Creator with all the mind and soul and strength, it gives to that commandment, and to the other which is like unto it, the whole force of its exhortations, its sanctions, its prayers. It knows of no substitute for piety and morality. It has no flatteries, no soothings for wilful sin; — it has but one hope for it, and that is in repentance. It is serious. It laughs at nothing venerable; it sports with nothing which is truly solemn and holy.

And yet it is a thology which is eminently cheerful. I might consider this characteristic also under a separate head. But true cheerfulness is so intimately connected with true seriousness; it grows up so congenially with it from the same confiding views of God and just principles of duty, that I mention it only in the general manner which the limits of this discourse permit to me; contenting myself with stating that it is the glory of this theology to be equally rational and scriptural, equally serious and cheerful.

3. And now in the third and last place, I will describe it, in a few words, as a *charitable* theology. Wearied not, repelled not by having the hand of its fellowship refused, it continues to reach it forth to all who are called

Christians. It completely recognizes the truth of man's frailty; the power of early associations and prejudices; the long lingering influence of creeds and systems, formed in ancient days and the world's dark age; the blinding effects of excited passions, rival interests, and the love of ascendency; the virtues, the good feelings, and the sincere piety which are often found in unequal union with narrow and forbidden doctrines; and the need in which we all stand of mutual forbearance and forgiveness, as well as of forbearance and forgiveness from on high. Recognizing these things, and calling them up to its frequent remembrance, it feels its kindly sentiments unimpaired, it keeps its flowing sympathies unchilled. Unaffectedly it calls all men brethren, and cherishes for all men a fraternal regard. Charitable itself, it must of necessity and its own essential nature, reprobate and strive against bigotry, intolerance, and exclusiveness; but it reprobates them in accents of pity, and it would strive against them chiefly by the works of benevolence, and the exhibitions of a gentle, kindly, and long-suffering spirit. It would supplant that which is evil, by the introduction of that which is good. It would separate each sincere Christian from his unchristian appendages, and contemplate him thus, with all his natural affections and acquired virtues and graces about him, in the equal and beautiful light of humanity and love.

I trust that I have delineated a theology which all my readers will approve. And where think you that such a theology is taught to those who are to teach it again, and diffuse it, by the help of God, over the land? Perhaps

you will say, that it must surely be taught in many of the schools of divinity, and that it ought to be taught in all. I can well enter into your feelings; but I believe it to be a melancholy truth that it is taught but in one school in our country — nay, but in one throughout the whole of the New World. I believe that in the whole of the Western continent, from its southernmost cape to the northern circle, there is but one spot, a green spot, in which such a theology is publicly taught. I believe that in one theological seminary only, in this hemisphere, the Divinity School at Cambridge, do religious liberality and charitableness, conjointly with seriousness, form the spirit of theological instruction. There, the sentiments of the professors and instructers are not swathed, and stiffened, and cramped by the tight folds of a human creed, but are left to their free motion and natural growth. They have, to be sure, their own peculiar doctrinal opinions, which are well known to be Unitarian, and these opinions must, of course, mingle in their instructions, and be perceived in their interpretations of Scripture. But above their doctrinal opinions there is seated the high spirit of freedom, which gives freedom, and the gentle spirit of charity, which breathes universal good will. And in the doctrine, or teaching of that school, is shown, we are persuaded, 'uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned.'

It is my object to direct your particular attention to that school, and to solicit for it your assistance. Your interest in it I know I shall excite by the simple statement, that it is the only institution from which you can expect to obtain well educated ministers of the gospel, whose instructions shall be marked by the characters of liberal-

ity, reasonableness, and charity, and shall be uttered in the spirit of that theology which recommends itself to your judgment and your hearts. Your assistance I hope to gain, by explaining to you how far, and in what respects it is needed.

The institution has risen up gradually, from very small beginnings, and has been obliged to contend with difficulties and discouragements. It may now be considered as established, and in successful operation. We have every reason to be grateful for its past success, its present condition, and its prospects. Its system of discipline is regular, and carefully administered; its course of instruction is well arranged, and conducted by teachers who are not only competent but eminent. Its connexion with the University offers literary privileges, in free admittance to lectures, and the use of the library, equal if not superior to those which are to be found anywhere else in our country.

But the advantages and attractions of the School, already so great, we wish to make still greater; and there are one or two deficiences in it which we should rejoice to see supplied. Although there is instruction provided in Church History, yet such is the importance of that branch, that the endowment of a professorship entirely devoted to it, would, in our opinion, be of essential advantage to the School. The library, also, which especially belongs to the school, is but small, and needs to be increased. It would be a worthy act of patronage to enlarge its stores.

This class of our wants, I cannot expect to be at once supplied. I bring it forward only that it may be

placed in the public view, and appeal for itself to the attention of those who feel an interest in the prosperity of the school, and the promotion of a liberal, serious, charitable christian theology. I regard it as the great religious charity of the day, towards which I would earnestly persuade the attentive and benevolent thoughts of all reflecting, liberal, serious Christians.

There is another class of wants, which are more immediately pressing, and more within the reach of present supply. There have always been those in the institution, who have been unable to pay the necessary expenses incurred in the course of their education, and who, because studious and exemplary in the first degree, have been assisted from various sources. The number of these has generally been in the proportion of about two thirds to the whole. They have hitherto received the requisite assistance. But it is wholly uncertain how long it can be continued to them, as there is but little permanent provision made for it. The school is increasing. It needs the establishment of permanent scholarships.

It is, then, more particularly for the purpose of supplying this deficiency, that the directors now ask your aid; and they ask it confidently, as in a good cause, and for a most worthy object. We would not be importunate. We would not say that these wants are to be attended to in disregard of the distresses of the suffering poor. We would not say that in supplying them, any one should straiten his family, or leave unfulfilled the just expectations of his relatives in the event of his death. Our theology is in this respect that of St Paul;

we think that 'if any provide not for his own and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.' But we would say, that very desirable aid can be rendered to the funds of the school, in ways and degrees which cannot be burthensome to any individual. We address the friends of a free and enlightened theology, and ask them to show their friendship by their benefactions in its behalf. The cause of the Cambridge school, and the cause of rational religion and pure Christianity, we sincerely hold to be one and the same. he prosperity of the former is intimately, perhaps inseparably, connected with the progress of the latter. If the one is suffered to struggle, the other must be embarrassed. We trust that this connexion will be perceived by an enlightened community; and when we have gained their attention, we shall feel confident of their generous aid.

NOTE.

A few alterations, required by recent changes in the condition of the Divinity School, have been made in the last three pages of the foregoing tract since the first edition was published. For the information of those who may wish to see a more particular statement of its means and course of instruction, the following account, taken from the Annual Catalogue for 1833, is subjoined.

DIVINITY SCHOOL.

Candidates for admission are expected to present themselves on the day before Commencement, and pass an examination in Hebrew Grammar, and the first ten chapters of Deuteronomy. If unknown to the Faculty, they are to produce testimonials to their moral and serious character. Candidates, not Bachelors of Arts, will be examined in Latin and Greek Grammar, Virgil, Cicero's Select Orations, Sallust, Jacob's Greek Reader, and the extracts from the Historians and Orators in the first volume of Collectanea Græca Majora. They are also expected to be acquainted with Butler's Analogy, Locke's Essay, or some other treatise on Intellectual Philosophy, Paley's Moral Philosophy, or some other standard work on Ethics, and some approved Compendium of Logic, Rhetoric, Geography, Arithmetic, Geometry, and Algebra.

Candidates for admission to an advanced standing must have been engaged in the study of Theology, as long as the class into which they propose to be received; and they are, upon examination, to satisfy the Faculty that they are well qualified for that standing.

Students are required to reside in or near Divinity Hall. They give bonds in the sum of $60 for the payment of term bills, which, including charges for instruction, rent, and care of room and furniture, and use of class books, amount to $66 annually. Board may be had in the College Commons for $1.90 a week. Each student must possess a copy of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, in the original languages, the latter in Griesbach's edition. A copy of all other class books is furnished on loan. Indigent Students are aided from foundations and other sources. Three years, including the vacations which amount to ten weeks in each year, complete the term of residence.

Instruction is given by the Hollis Professor, Rev. Dr Ware, in Natural Religion, Evidences of Revealed Religion, Church History, and Systematic Theology.

——————by the Professor of Pulpit Eloquence and the Pastoral Care, Rev. Mr Ware jr, in Extempore Speaking, the Composition and Delivery of Sermons, and the Duties of the Pastoral Office.

——————by the Professor of Biblical Literature, Rev. Mr Palfrey, in Hebrew, and the Criticism of the Old and New Testaments.

Students are entitled to receive instruction from the Professor of the German Language and Literature, and to be present at all public lectures of the University.

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ON

CHRISTIAN SALVATION.

By BERNARD WHITMAN.

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CHRISTIAN SALVATION.

What must I do to be saved?—Acts, xvi. 30.

Can a more important question be asked by sinful mortals? Do we not all admit its importance, when we feel the compunctions of an accusing conscience? when we reflect on our deep depravity of heart and life? and when we consider our capacities for eternal suffering or enjoyment? Do we not acknowledge its importance, when we witness the awful ravages of wickedness, in destroying whatever is dignified in humanity; whatever is useful in character; whatever is improving in social intercourse; whatever is productive of happiness in domestic life, and whatever can give peace and hope in the hour of death? Are we not sensible of its importance, when we behold the Son of the living God laboring, teaching, suffering and dying to redeem us from iniquity and wretchedness? Are we not convinced of its importance, when we contemplate the infinite love of our heavenly Father, in sending his well beloved Son to rescue us from our degradation; in giving to him his holy spirit without measure, and in qualifying him to become the Saviour of the world? Let me then invite your attention to the infinitely important subject of christian salvation.

I. What, then, is christian salvation? It is deliverance from ignorance, error and sin; and the possession of christian knowledge, virtue and piety. Perhaps I can render this definition more clear by a familiar example. Suppose then that a learned heathen now stood before me; one who worshipped idols; one who had heard of Jesus, and believed him to be an imposter; one whose conduct was openly immoral. I undertake to convert him to Christianity by rational argument and evangelical motives. I first convince him of the existence of one infinite Creator, Governor and Father. You perceive that he would then be saved from his ignorance concerning the nature and perfections of the Supreme Being; as well as from the folly and darkness of idolatry. I next convince him that Jesus of Nazareth is the divinely commissioned Saviour of the world. You perceive that he would then be saved from his erroneous opinions respecting the one Mediator between God and men; as well as from an evil heart of unbelief. I further convince him that if he would be a true Christian, he must obey the instructions, imitate the example and imbibe the spirit of the great Author and Finisher of our faith. When his actions give evidence of a reformation of heart and life, you perceive that he would be saved from his iniquities; as well as blessed with a righteous and holy character. When these things are accomplished, you must admit that he has experienced christian salvation.

Now from this illustration, you may learn four most important gospel truths. First, that christian salvation consists in deliverance from ignorance, error and sin; and in the possession of christian knowledge, virtue and piety. Secondly, that this salvation takes place whenever

a person becomes a practical Christian. Thirdly, that so long as any one continues a practical Christian, he is in no danger of punishment. And fourthly, that divine pardon can be obtained only by forming a christian character. The truth of these four propositions, I will now endeavor to prove, from reason, observation, and the Scriptures.

1. I am first to prove that christian salvation consists in deliverance from ignorance, error and sin; and in the possession of christian knowledge, virtue and piety. Look then to the scriptural argument. Why was our Saviour called Jesus? "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." Why did he appear on earth? "The son of man is come to save that which was lost;" lost in darkness, doubt and depravity. Why did he commission Paul to visit the gentiles? "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Why did he give himself a ransom for sinners? "To redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And who are the subjects of his saving power? "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." If then a person is turned from heathenism, to the service of the living God; if he is redeemed from his iniquities, and rendered zealous of the good works of the gospel; he is surely saved from his religious blindness and iniquity, and possessed of christian instruction and holiness. Many more passages of a similar import might be quoted, but these are sufficient to prove the truth of the first proposition.

2. I am secondly to prove that this salvation takes place whenever a person becomes a practical Christian

Look again at the argument from revelation. What did Jesus say to the penitent female who anointed his feet at the house of Simon the Pharisee? "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." *Hath saved thee;* not will save thee at some future period; but, hath even now secured thy salvation. His miraculous powers enabled him to know that her repentance was sincere, that her reformation was commenced, and that her belief in his divine mission would influence her to strive for christian perfection. What is the exhortation of Paul to his beloved Timothy? "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God, who hath saved us." *Hath saved us;* not will hereafter confer salvation; but hath already saved us, by aiding us in becoming obedient disciples of Christ Jesus. What is his testimony concerning God in his letter to Titus? "According to his mercy he saved us." *He saved us.* If he had before saved them, their salvation could not be an event of futurity. The same apostle makes these explicit declarations to his converts. "We are saved by hope." "By grace ye are saved." *Are saved!* In both cases the salvation was then experienced. This meaning is more strongly expressed in the original. The literal translation is this — we *were* saved by hope; by grace ye *were* saved. Thus no doubt remains that he spoke of an event already passed. Take one example from the epistle of Peter. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us." *Doth now save us!* This ordinance was then leading them to the acquisition of christian knowledge, virtue and piety; and thus saving them from ignorance, error and sin. If then our Saviour pronounced his disciples saved, as soon as they cordially embraced his religion; and if the inspired

apostles declared that their reformed converts, as well as themselves, had already experienced salvation; surely christian salvation takes place whenever a person becomes a practical Christian. Many similar passages might be produced, but these are sufficient to prove the truth of the second proposition.

3. I am thirdly to prove that so long as any one continues a practical Christian, he is in no danger of punishment. He will not indeed be saved from temporal afflictions, as were many of them who attended upon our Lord's personal ministry; but these are not to be considered punishments. Still the words save, saved, salvation and Saviour are frequently used in the scriptures in reference to these evils. From such trials, the sincere Christian is now delivered only so far as his cheerful resignation raises him above their influence. But he is in no danger of suffering that misery which is the natural consequence of sin. For there is a hell only for the impenitent and disobedient; and what is called the wrath of God abides only on those who are his enemies by their wicked works. And there is no future condemnation to those who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For what does Paul say to his Roman converts? "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, *being now justified* by his blood, we *shall be saved* from *wrath* through him. For if, when we were enemies, *we were reconciled* to God through the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, *we shall be saved* by his life." Here you perceive that two kinds of salvation are mentioned. The first was deliverance from sin, which they had already experienced; the second would be deliver-

ance from wrath, or the natural consequence of sin, in a future world, which would take place hereafter. For if they remained holy, no torment would await their entrance upon another existence. Paul's only fear on this subject was, lest any should abandon the christian character, and become so wicked as to incur future punishment. And although an inspired apostle, he manifests his sense of the danger, even in regard to himself; for he has written this passage. 'But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached unto others, *I myself should be a castaway.*" A few other passages might be adduced to prove that the practical Christian has nothing to fear but sin; but enough has been said to prove the truth of the third proposition.

4. I am fourthly to prove, that divine pardon can be obtained only by the formation of a christian character. And what is divine pardon? Nothing more nor less than deliverance from the power and punishment of sin; and the possession and enjoyment of holiness. And can the sinner secure this without reformation and improvement? Look once more to the law and the testimony. What are the words of Isaiah? "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." This is perfectly plain. If the depraved forsakes his depravity, he escapes its punishment. What are the words of Jeremiah? "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them, that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and sin." This is equally plain. The house

of Judah could obtain forgiveness only by forsaking their iniquities. And what was our Saviour's commission to his apostles? "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name." And what is repentance, but forsaking wickedness and acquiring holiness? and what is the remission of sins, but deliverance from their power and punishment? And what was the exhortation of Peter? "Repent and be converted." Why? "That your sins may be blotted out." You perceive that pardon and reformation are inseparable. Whoever forsakes any sin, that sin is immediately pardoned; and until a sin is forsaken, it cannot be forgiven. This is the current language of revelation. A host of texts might be produced in proof of this assertion; but sufficient have been quoted to prove the truth of the fourth proposition.

But I will not trust to scriptural evidence alone. I appeal to your observation. Take the man of intemperance. You perceive that his unlawful indulgence causes immediate pain, and not unfrequently sickness. The seeds of various diseases soon take deep root, and undermine the constitution; the balance of temper is destroyed; the tender sympathies of the soul are perverted; the benevolent affections of the heart are brutalized; the moral powers are rendered insensible to good impressions; the intellectual faculties are enervated and shattered; property is dissipated; family and friends are disgraced; and the order of social life is disturbed. Add to all this, his distressing reflections on the past; his inefficient and broken resolutions of the present; his dismal forebodings of the future, and what earthly punishment more severe need be imagined? And how is he to obtain pardon for this sin? Suppose God should audibly pronounce his

forviveness from heaven; would this insure his happiness, so long as he continued intemperate? No. It would be of no service whatever for him to know that he was pardoned in the mind of his heavenly Father, so long as his punishment was not removed. He can secure enjoyment only by reformation. So it is with every sin of heart and life. We may pray for forgiveness, and appeal to the divine mercy; but unless we endeavor to forsake our iniquities, we only prove ourselves hypocrites. The husbandman may as well expect a harvest, without any cultivation of the soil. No. All such expectations are irrational and unscriptural. God is indeed sufficiently merciful. He is infinite love. He is a perfect Father of all his children. But no change takes place in his character when our sins are pardoned. The reformation must be in ourselves. And although we were already pardoned in his mind, we could not escape from the punishment of a single sin, until it was forsaken. Consequently, we can obtain the divine pardon only by forming a christian character.

But will not the punishment frequently continue after the sin is forsaken? Will reformation restore to the man of intemperance, his impaired constitution, his wasted estate, his lost confidence, and his self-approbation? Surely not. The consequences of sin must remain long after it is forsaken; perhaps forever. And for this there can be no immediate pardon; because so long as we remain the same persons, whether in time or eternity, our memories must remind us of our past transgressions. Do you suppose that Judas can ever forget that he betrayed his Master? And whenever this base act of treachery occurs to his mind, must it not fill his soul with the

most excruciating anguish? Yes. Sin is the same to the soul that poison is to the body. Take poison, and you injure or destroy your health. Commit sin, and you injure or destroy your soul's happiness. Expel the poison, and you regain your health; although your constitution will be injured in proportion to the quantity taken, and the time it is retained in the system. Forsake sin, and you regain your happiness; although your soul will be injured in proportion to the degree and duration of your depravity; and you must be forever the worse for the sins committed. Until you expel the poison, you cannot regain your health. Until you forsake your sin, you cannot escape its punishment, nor experience divine pardon, nor obtain christian salvation. I must conclude, therefore, that the four propositions are proved true, from reason, observation, and scripture.

II. By whom are we saved? By our heavenly Father. He is the original fountain of all our salvation. He saves us from temporal inconveniences and calamities, inasmuch as he provides the means for our daily support and enjoyment. He saves us from sin and its consequences, inasmuch as he furnishes the means of our moral and religious improvement and happiness. Consequently, he is our supreme Saviour. The truth of this proposition I will now prove from reason and scripture.

1. Reason teaches us that our heavenly Father is our supreme Saviour. How so? Because he is the original author of our lives, and all things in existence. And for what purpose has he given us being? To increase his own felicity? Surely not. For he is the perfect, independent Creator; and consequently, his happiness could

neither be increased nor diminished. He must therefore have created us solely for our own enjoyment; because he is infinite love. This is also evident from our very constitution, and our unnumbered blessings. Now if this be the fact, and if he has implanted within us an unceasing craving for some higher good; and if he has furnished us with various capacities for sensitive and rational happiness; and if he has placed us in a scene of constant danger and want, does it not follow from the very attributes of his nature, that he will furnish the necessary means for the gratification of our innocent desires, and for our protection from the various evils to which we are exposed? Not only so. If he has subjected us to continual temptation; and if he has encouraged an insatiable longing for future existence, is it not clear from the very perfections of his character, that he will provide the means of escape from iniquity, and open before us the portals of immortality, and furnish us with opportunities for the protection of our spiritual nature? Should an earthly parent leave his dependent child to perish, either by accident, or cruelty, or starvation, should you not pronounce him an inhuman monster? How infinitely more cruel and unnatural would it be for the perfect, supreme Creator of the universe to forsake the children of his affection, and neglect to make provision for their animal and spiritual wants. But this is impossible. For a perfect God must necessarily be unchangeable in his character. And if love prompted him to create intelligent offspring, that same affection must ever dispose him to regard them with tenderness; and to be their eternal Benefactor, Preserver, Father, and Saviour. And universal experience has thus far declared, that the Lord is good to all, and

that his tender mercies are over all the works of his hands; and consequently, he must remain the universal and supreme Saviour.

2. Revelation also teaches us that our heavenly Father is our supreme Saviour. Turn to the scriptures, and you will perceive that he is represented as the original source of all temporal salvation. You will find this decisive declaration in the book of Isaiah. "I, even I, am the Lord; and besides me there is no Saviour." You may find a similar expression in the book of Hosea. "Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me; for there is no Saviour besides me." Notwithstanding these positive assertions, you learn that this only Saviour employs agents to effect the various purposes of temporal protection and preservation. Look again to the writings of Isaiah. "For they shall cry unto the Lord because of their oppressors, and he shall send them a Saviour, a great one, and he shall deliver them." And in Nehemiah you find this passage. "In the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven, and according to thy manifold mercies, thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hands of their enemies.' Now these texts prove most satisfactorily, that although there is no Saviour besides Jehovah; yet that he frequently raised up and qualified other saviours, to redeem his chosen people from temporal calamities. The same kindness he continues to manifest towards us. For he is now, as ever, the original source of all our means of support, comfort, and improvement. By the various gifts of his providence, he now saves us from hunger and nakedness, from slavery and oppression, from war and pestilence, from ignorance

and crime, from sickness and death. And he freely gives us, through a variety of second causes, all our talents, privileges, blessings, and hopes. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; and in him we all live, and move, and have our being."

3. Revelation likewise instructs us that our heavenly Father is our supreme Saviour in spiritual concerns. You find this declaration in Paul's first epistle to Timothy. "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Now this refers to the salvation of the soul from sin and wretchedness; and expresses very clearly the desire of our Father to have all his children embrace the gospel and reap its rich rewards. In the same epistle, you find another passage equally explicit. "We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe." This needs no explanation. Not only so. The beloved disciple thus affirms. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." This fully proves that we are solely indebted to our Father for the unspeakable gift of a spiritual Saviour; and for all the means of moral renovation and improvement. This is confirmed by Paul. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." In another place, he uses this language. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." You perceive that God and his son are both

called Saviours in the same verse. But you also notice that it is expressly asserted, that God had saved them by Christ Jesus. The one was the author of salvation, and the other the instrument. Many more passages of the same import might be quoted; but these are sufficient to prove that our heavenly Father is our supreme Saviour. Yes; he is the original fountain of all temporal and spiritual salvation, as I have fairly proved from reason and scripture.

III. By what means does our heavenly Father effect our christian salvation? By certain instruments, principles and motives. The most important of these I will now describe.

1. Our heavenly Father saves us through the instrumentality of Christ Jesus. He brought him into being, commissioned him to be a Saviour of all who would come unto him, and qualified him for the successful execution of his divine office. These truths are plainly taught in various parts of the unerring scriptures. Turn to the book of Acts, and you hear the inspired apostles addressing their brethren in these words. "Then Peter and the other Apostles answered — We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree, him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins." You here learn that the God of the Jews had brought Jesus into existence, and qualified him to be an instrument of their salvation. Take another passage from the letter of the beloved John. "And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." You here perceive that our Father sent

his Son to be a Saviour, not merely for the Jews, but for all nations. More passages of the same character might be easily adduced ; but these are amply sufficient to prove that our heavenly Father has created and commissioned Jesus of Nazareth to be an instrument of salvation to mankind.

But how is Christ Jesus an instrument for our salvation? Let Peter answer this question. "God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." So far then as he turns any one from his wickedness, so far he saves him from its punishment, and no farther ; and he effects the salvation of sinners in no other way. But in what manner does he turn us from our sins? Let this question be answered by the experience of those already saved ; by the best Christians of all denominations. Inquire what first induced them to become sincere disciples of Jesus, and you will receive a variety of replies. You will find that some have been early and successfully trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and gradually drawn into the paths of holiness, by the pure morality of the gospel ; while others have been converted more suddenly in maturer years, by the great discoveries of Christianity. You will find that some have been excited to consideration and amendment, by the example of Jesus ; while others have been influenced to obedience, by his benevolent labors and stupendous miracles. You will find that some have been stimulated to exertion in the christian life, by his glorious promises of a heavenly reward ; while others have been savingly alarmed, by the awful threatenings of future punishment. You will find that some have been melted to contrition by his agonizing sufferings ; while others have bowed their stubborn wills

before the majesty of his cross. From these and similar confessions, you must conclude that Jesus saves us from our iniquities, by his life and labors; by his example and instructions; by his consolations and discoveries; by his promises and threatenings, and by his sufferings and death. And what is proved true by actual experience, you find confirmed by the clearest declarations of scripture. For spiritual salvation is there ascribed to these various causes; sometimes to one, sometimes to another, and sometimes to all combined. The whole process is therefore perfectly plain and intelligible. Jesus exerts no mysterious or miraculous influence over our souls. So far as he induces us to become good, so far he is instrumental in our salvation, and no farther; for we are not now saved, and we shall never be saved, any farther than we become holy. This is expressly declared by our Saviour himself. "Not every one that saith unto me — Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." The writer to the Hebrews is equally decided. "Christ Jesus became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Consequently, those who continue disobedient are not partakers of his salvation.

2. Our heavenly Father saves us through the instrumentality of his holy word. This truth is likewise plainly taught in scripture. What is the exhortation of James to his readers? "Receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls." You find the following petition in one of our Saviour's last prayers. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Paul addresses his beloved Timothy in these words. "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures,

which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." And Peter addresses his converts as already saved by this instrument. "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." These passages are sufficient to prove that the scriptures of truth are a divinely appointed instrument of salvation; and that they contain the necessary efficacy to accomplish this glorious purpose.

But how does the Bible effect our salvation? By warning us of our moral dangers, furnishing remedies for our spiritual diseases, and providing instruction in relation to our immortal interests. For we are assured that "all scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Let me then illustrate this position by a familiar example. Give a navigator an accurate chart of some dangerous coast, let it exhibit a perfect delineation of all rocks, shoals, and quicksands; let the course of safety be described with equal fidelity and plainness. Now if he follow the right directions, his chart will be instrumental in the salvation of himself, his crew and his vessel; but if he proceed in a contrary path, his neglect will expose him to all the calamities of shipwreck. So with the bible. Put it into the hands of an intelligent child of God, and he will readily perceive that it discloses the moral dangers to which he is exposed, and that it discovers a sure and safe way to holiness and heaven. He will feel conscious of freedom and ability, either to disregard its admonitions, or to comply with its requisitions. Now if he follow its instructions, he will assuredly

be saved from ignorance, vice and misery; and rendered enlightened, virtuous and happy. But if he slight its warnings, despise its counsels and disobey its injunctions, he will as certainly experience the consequences of ignorance, error and sin. The bible is instrumental in effecting his salvation in the same way that a chart saves the mariner from shipwreck. The divine word contains the same efficacy now as at the period of its first promulgation. Whoever sincerely endeavors to make it the standard of his faith and practice, will inevitably secure salvation, although he should be deprived of the privilege of hearing the preached gospel. But no one should be so foolish as to suppose this holy book possesses any mysterious or miraculous charm. No. You may cover every shelf in your house with bibles; you may place them under every pillow; you may even bind them to every heart; and if you use them in no other way, you may as well expect salvation from your almanac. No. The bible will do you no good, unless you study its pages, and understand its contents, and obey its instructions; and then it will prove instrumental in your salvation just so far as it makes you wiser, better and holier, and no farther.

3. Our heavenly Father saves us through the influence of his holy spirit. This fact is plainly taught in the gospel. Look into the writings of Paul. To the Philippians he saith —"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." To the Thessalonians he saith — "God hath chosen you to salvation through the sanctification of the spirit." And again, "God hath also given unto us his holy spirit." To the Romans speaking of the gentiles, he saith—"Being sanctified by the holy ghost."

And to Titus, he saith,—"God saved us by the renewing of the holy ghost." More passages of a similar import might be readily quoted, but these satisfactorily prove that our heavenly Father saves us through the influence of his holy spirit.

But how does the spirit of God effect our salvation? Let an inspired apostle answer this question. "The spirit also helpeth our infirmities." But how is this help communicated? In a supernatural manner? Does it give us the power of working miracles, and of speaking unknown languages? No. It was so imparted to the apostles and some of their first Jewish and Gentile converts; so as to convince them more deeply of the truth of Christianity, and aid them more effectually in its propagation. But we have no good evidence that any believers have received this special influence of the spirit since the apostolic age. — Is it communicated in an irresistible manner? Does it compel us to become Christians? No. For this would destroy our accountableness, and directly contradict the scriptures. These commands are plainly given. "Quench not the spirit." "Grieve not the holy spirit of God." And this charge was boldly made to the Jews; "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the holy ghost." If they had power to withstand its influence, we must surely possess the same power, for human nature in this respect remains unchanged. — Is it communicated in an arbitrary manner? Is it bestowed without any conditions? No. It is promised to those, and those only, who ask, seek, and knock for its assistance. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the

holy spirit to them that ask him." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." Our Father is ever ready to help all who help themselves; and as he has promised aid to none others, those who neglect the means of grace, must not expect any peculiar assistance. — Is it communicated in a discernible manner? Can we distinguish its operations from the results of our own thoughts, feelings, affections and imaginations? No. For if we could, we should realize as much of a miracle as any wrought by our Saviour; and we all believe the day of miracles to be past. And to prevent this pernicious error, our divine Master has given us a very explicit caution. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit." — Is it communicated in a uniform manner? Does it assist all persons in the same way, and at any one particular period? No. For then we could determine the mode and time of operation. But experience furnishes no such result. And an inspired apostle assures us, that there "are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." If the help of the spirit is communicated in none of these ways, how is it imparted? Neither revelation nor experience furnishes an answer to this question. We must therefore rest satisfied with knowing that we are assisted by the holy spirit in our exertions for salvation; and assisted in such a way as not to affect our free agency. We have a parallel case in the productions of nature. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise, night and

day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the ear bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." If you see the ripened grain, you know that God has blessed the labors of the husbandman, although you cannot tell the time when, nor the manner how. So in religion. If you behold a person exhibiting love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, you know that his infirmities have received help from the holy spirit. And just so far as this influence produces these christian fruits, just so far it is instrumental in our salvation, and no farther.

4. Our heavenly Father saves us through the instrumentality of the christian ministry. Paul informs us that Christ Jesus "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." He was himself an apostle of this number; and he acquaints us with some of the measures of his ministry. "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." He also gives an exhortation to Timothy on this subject. "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." He likewise declared that it "pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." These texts plainly prove that the christian ministry is an appointed means of spiritual salvation; and that faithful ministers are instruments in the hand of God for the conversion of sinners.

But how does the minister of Christ effect our salva-

tion ? By inducing us to forsake and avoid sin ; to acquire and maintain holiness. And by what means does he accomplish these objects ? Ask those pious believers who readily ascribe their salvation to the instrumentality of their pastors. They will frankly confess, that their attention was first awakened to the claims of religion, by some rational, affecting, or persuasive discourse. Or they will freely admit, that they were first excited to duty, by the conversation of their religious teacher, either in public or private, either at the bed of sickness, in the hour of death, or at the house of affliction. There are others indeed in almost every society, who will not acknowledge that they have received any perceptible benefit from the christian ministry. But is there not reason to believe, that they have been imperceptibly deterred from many vain thoughts and sinful desires, from many unkind remarks and cruel accusations, from many vicious practices and wicked habits, by hearing the weekly sound of the everlasting gospel ? Is there not reason to believe, that they have also been excited, in the same way, to cherish good feelings, to cultivate amiable dispositions, to exhibit benevolent sympathies, and to perform righteous actions ? You can judge fairly of the saving effects of preaching, only by comparing the intellectual and moral state of a whole congregation, where no christian instructions have lately been dispensed, with one which has long enjoyed the blessings of religious institutions. Whenever this is done candidly, you will be convinced, that the constant warnings against wickedness, the continual recommendations of righteousness, the unceasing proclamation of the love of God and the claims of Christ,

and the ever ascending spiritual devotion, have a direct and powerful tendency to elevate the tone of moral feeling and character. And the principal reason that more apparent good is not effected, must be found in the hearers. The apostle fully confirms the truth of this assertion. "For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." This must ever be the case so long as men are free agents. Their improvement from preaching must depend on their own exertions, in connection with the promised blessing. Yes; you may attend church on every returning sabbath; you may have the most eloquent preacher in christendom; you may hear the whole counsel of God declared from week to week and from year to year; and unless you listen to the truths of religion, and bring them home to your minds and consciences, and strive to reduce them to practice, you can reap but little benefit from the christian ministry; for this instrument will save you just so far as it makes you good, and no farther.

5. Our heavenly Father saves us through the instrumentality of the events of his providence. These are of two kinds, joyous and grievous. Both are wisely designed to lead his intelligent children to consideration and obedience. This is clearly taught in various passages of scripture, Listen to the words of Paul. "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Hear also the declaration of the Almighty. "In their affliction they will seek me early!" In accordance with this is the testimony of David. "Be-

fore I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." And the consolation of the Hebrew converts is equally to the point. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." These texts fully prove that the prosperous and afflictive events of providence are an instrument of christian salvation.

But how do the events of providence effect our salvation? By leading us to self-examination, and self-improvement. Prosperity is admirably adapted to excite our gratitude to our heavenly Benefactor, and encourage unreserved obedience to his holy laws. No doubt many may be found in every religious denomination, on whom the goodness of God has exerted its saving influence. But I fear the pleasing events of life have corrupted a still larger number, and rendered them more thoughtless and worldly minded, more covetous and depraved. On the other hand, adversity has produced an abundant harvest of holiness. The afflictive events of providence have probably awakened the attention of more persons to the concerns of religion, than any other cause whatever. You find some in almost every church who were first moved to commence the work of salvation, by some disappointment, desertion or suffering; by the loss either of health, or friends, or property. But affliction has not uniformly produced holy fruits. Many have been hardened by their trials, and made more depraved and wretched. This must continue to be the case so long as we remain free agents. Our Father designs our best good in all the events of his providence. We have power, either to improve them to our salvation, or to misimprove them to our condemna-

tion. Our interest, our duty, and our happiness coincide. Let no one then be so simple as to think he shall be always sure of happiness, without personal holiness, because he now receives a large share of temporal blessings. For unless he faithfully improves all his talents, they will hereafter swell the fountain of his misery. Neither let any one believe that he is sure of future felicity, simply because he is afflicted while on earth. No. You may see every hope of your soul blasted; you may be deserted by every mortal friend; you may be tormented with every bodily disease; you may be stripped of every earthly comfort; and if your trials render you more peevish, repining and rebellious, they will assuredly increase your guilt, your wretchedness and your condemnation. Unless they serve to wean your affections from earthly vanities; unless they raise your thoughts to the unseen realities of eternity; unless they lead you to self-scrutiny, self-discipline and self-cultivation, they cannot promote your christian salvation. For this instrument will save you just so far as it makes you holy, and no farther.

6. Our heavenly Father saves us through the influence of faith. A belief in the Messiahship of Jesus leads to christian salvation. You find this truth plainly taught on almost every page of the gospel. What was the answer of Peter to the question of the jailer? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." How did our Saviour close his commission to his apostles? "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Listen also to the declaration of Paul. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe

in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." A multitude of similar passages might be quoted; but these satisfactorily prove, that faith in Jesus is a principle of christian salvation.

But how does faith effect our salvation? By influencing our thoughts, motives and conduct in the ways of truth, virtue and piety. It operates in the same manner as our belief in many other facts. Much of our daily conduct is the result of faith, and not of certain knowledge. Take an example. You may find a man of learning, who was comparatively ignorant when he arrived at years of maturity. His advantages of instruction had been few and defective. But he believed that important and valuable literary acquisitions might be made by attention to study. He accordingly procured the necessary books, employed the requisite instructers, and devoted to the pursuit of knowledge a sufficient portion of time and thought. And what is the result? A good education. This is therefore the effect of his belief; for it was his faith which first excited him to commence a literary course, and stimulated him to persevere to the accomplishment of his wishes. Now faith in the anointed Jesus operates in precisely the same manner. A person becomes rationally convinced that he is the divinely commissioned Saviour of sinners. He therefore receives all his instructions as eternal truth. These assure him that salvation can be obtained only by obedience to the divine commands. He accordingly makes the necessary exertion for the acquisition of a christian character. This is the natural result of his belief. His faith in Jesus therefore influences him to obedience, and secures his deliverance from iniquity, and his possession of holiness. And

in this process, there is nothing more mysterious than in the faith of the student.

But are there not two kinds of faith? Certainly; the one speculative, and the other practical; the one living, and the other dead; the one of the head, and the other of the heart; for "with the heart man beleveth unto righteousness." And you may frequently see both kinds exemplified in the concerns of this world. Take an example. You behold two persons strongly tempted to engage in gambling. You assure them, that if they follow this pernicious practice, they will sooner or later lose their property, ruin their character and disgrace their friends. You adduce sufficient evidence to convince them of the truth of your assertions. Now the faith of one is practical, and influences him to resist the temptation, and thus saves him from severe punishment. The faith of the other is speculative, and while he professes to believe in the ruinous consequences of the forbidden vice, permits him to engage and continue in its fascinations and fatal allurements. So in religion. The great majority in civilized lands profess to believe in the christian religion. A part only are influenced by their faith to conform to its requisitions. The remainder act in direct opposition to their profession, because their belief is merely speculative. So far, therefore, as a person's faith induces him to obey the christian commands, so far it is instrumental in his salvation, and no farther. And a belief in any particular doctrine or set of opinions is of no further value to any person, than it contributes to his goodness or happiness. For no one will ever be judged by the articles of his creed, but by the fruits of his faith, "the deeds done in the body." Consequently no faith is effectual to salvation,

except that "which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world."

7. Our heavenly Father saves us through the influence of hope. This is expressly asserted by an inspired apostle. "We are saved by hope." He here refers to the hope of present and future happiness, which is the natural and certain consequence of personal holiness. For in another place, he makes this declaration; "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." And Peter gives thanks for the heavenly inheritance reserved for the righteous. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope,— to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." More passages of a similar nature might be easily quoted; but these clearly prove that the hope of present and future reward is a principle of christian salvation.

But how does hope effect our salvation? By influencing us to become the obedient followers of Jesus. For John informs us, "that every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth him elf even as Christ is pure." Many of our temporal affairs are regulated by this very principle. Take an example. Why does the husbandman prepare the soil, sow the seed, and cultivate the growing plant? Does he surely know that success will crown his exertions? No. The mere hope of a harvest is the moving cause of his labors. So in religion. A person really desires to obtain present and future happiness; he is convinced, from reason, and observation, and scripture, that nothing but christian obedience can secure these bless-

ings. His hope therefore influences his conduct, and causes him to comply with the prescribed conditions of salvation. So far then as his moral goodness is the result of his christian hope, so far is this principle instrumental in his salvation, and no farther. And there is nothing more incomprehensible in its operation, than in the hope of the husbandman.

But are there not two kinds of hope? Certainly; the one living, and influencing the conduct; and the other dead, and exerting no salutary influence. An illustration of both kinds may be readily furnished from real life. Two persons are equally desirous of obtaining a fortune. The hope of one is a living principle, and influences him to rise early, and retire late, and "eat the bread of carefulness;" and thus enables him to secure the object of his wishes. The hope of the other is inoperative, and permits him to remain inactive, unenterprising, and perhaps imprudent; and thus naturally disappoints his desires. So in spiritual concerns. All persons wish for present and future happiness. A part only are influenced by their hope to make the necessary exertions for the acquisition of christian virtue. The remainder continue more or less negligent and disobedient; and consequently secure but a small portion even of earthly enjoyment, and leave the world with a very imperfect preparation for heavenly felicity. Now for a person to hope for salvation, while neglecting the christian duties, is more absurd, than for a pauper to expect riches, while confined to the almshouse. And for him to expect present and future happiness, while walking in the paths of open wickedness, is infinitely more absurd, than for the person who cannot

swim, to hope for salvation from drowning, while he continues plunging further and deeper into the bosom of the ocean. Just so far, therefore, as our hope of happiness influences us to become good, just so far is this principle instrumental in our salvation, and no farther. And this living hope is the only one which will not make us ashamed.

8. Our heavenly Father saves us through the influence of fear. This is taught by the precepts and example of our Saviour and his apostles. Jude requires different classes of sinners to be treated in various methods; and then adds this injunction; "Others save with fear." A fear of the natural and certain consequences of sin deters from its commission. The inspired preachers frequently appealed to this principle. Listen to the words of Jesus. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Take also an example from Paul. "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come, Felix trembled." "God will render unto every man according to his deeds; to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." These passages are sufficient to prove that our Saviour and his apostles appealed to the fears of their hearers; and that fear is a principle of christian salvation.

But how does fear effect our christian salvation? By deterring us from wickedness. We are daily influenced by this principle in the regulation of our own conduct,

and in our government of those under our protection. Take a family of children. Some of them may be persuaded to filial obedience, by kind and generous motives; while others can be moved to duty only by the fear of punishment. So in the christian world. Present religion to the attention of men, and some are induced by the purest principles of action to commence and continue the work of reformation and improvement; while others seem hardened against every tender and affecting consideration. You may persuade and entreat them to embrace the gospel by the friendship and sufferings and death of a crucified Saviour; by the mercy and love and blessings of a heavenly Father; by all that is dear and desirable on earth and in heaven; and you produce little or no effect. You must depict the bitter fruits of sin, and describe the torments of the damned, and arouse their fears of hell, before you can start the tears of penitence. Inquire into the experience of many good Christians, in almost every denomination, and you will learn that the fear of misery first induced them to begin the work of salvation. Had not the terrors of the Lord been proclaimed, they might have continued impenitent even to the present hour, and perhaps become hardened profligates. But commencing the work of religion in fear, the very lowest principle of human nature, they gradually learned to love God for his goodness, and to serve him for the rewards of holiness. So far, therefore, as the fear of punishment influences us to forsake and avoid sin, so far it is instrumental in our salvation, and no farther.

But does not fear operate in different ways? Certainly. You may see this illustrated in temporal concerns. Be-

hold a vessel in a dangerous storm. The fear of shipwreck nerves one mariner with double courage and strength; and enables him to make wonderful exertions for self-preservation. A second is wholly unmanned, becomes faint and sick, and is perhaps left a prey to despair. So in the concerns of the soul. The fear of punishment influences one to persevere in a sober, righteous and godly life. A second is wholly unnerved, driven to despair, perhaps deprived of the use of his reasoning powers, and even abandoned to self-destruction. But when this takes place, we may be assured that his fears have not been excited by the terrors of the Lord. For Jesus and his apostles certainly declared the whole counsel of God; sinners were as depraved then as now; and we have no account of any such occurrence under their preaching. We cannot do better than imitate their example, and make sinners fear nothing so much as the natural and lasting consequences of their sins.

Perhaps you will now ask, if we are not saved by our good works? Whatever may be said as to our being saved by them, it is certain that we cannot be saved without them; for they are the only scriptural evidence of a christian character, as well as the chief method of forming it. This is the reason that they are so emphatically insisted upon by our Saviour and his Apostles. Perhaps there is no other subject, on which they have said so much and so earnestly; because, if not holiness itself, they are the manifestations of holiness, and considered in connexion with their motives, the elements of it. If the fruit be bad, you pronounce the tree corrupt. If the stream be bitter, you call the fountain impure. If the

outward actions be vicious, you declare the heart depraved. For the same reason, if the conduct be virtuous, you consider the soul to be holy. Hence you see the infinite importance of good works; for without them there can be no evidence of christian holiness; and consequently no ground to hope for salvation. In this conclusion, the sacred writers wonderfully harmonize. I know, indeed, that some persons have supposed Paul and James at variance on this point. But this is the mistake of ignorance. Paul asserts that a Christian is saved without works of law. By works of law, he means the Jewish rites and ceremonies; circumcision, sacrifices, fasting, washing of hands, paying tithes, and the like. And surely these cannot aid a believer in Jesus in forsaking his iniquities. He also declares that a man is justified by faith alone. By faith, he intends that living, operative principle, which is as sure to yield good fruits, as the sun is to send forth light and heat. And it is this faith which saves the believer; but good works are the only evidence of the existence of such a principle. Now James was probably writing to those who had perverted the meaning of Paul; and he insists that a man cannot be saved without works. By works, he means the fruits of love to God and man, holiness of heart and life; and he proves his proposition so clearly, that no one ought to mistake his conclusion. The real sentiments, then, of both apostles, are in perfect harmony with the instructions of their divine Master. The substance of the whole matter, therefore, is manifestly this. Just so far as a person obeys Jesus, just so far will he bring forth good works; and just so far as he exhibits good works, just so far is he a

practical Christian; and just so far as he is a practical Christian, just so far is he saved, and no farther.

One most important consideration remains to be mentioned. It is this. We are saved by the grace of God. Yes. To the free grace of our heavenly Father are we indebted for all the means of our salvation. And what is free grace? Let me give an imperfect illustration by an example. Suppose an earthly monarch should make a feast, and cordially invite all his subjects to come and partake freely. He receives nothing in return for his entertainment; and consequently it is the gift of his grace or favor. If any of the invited guests refuse to attend, the fault is wholly their own; and for their loss of the pleasure, they can justly blame none but themselves. So it is with our heavenly Father. He wishes all his children to be happy. He knows they can be happy only by being good. He has accordingly furnished all the means necessary for securing their goodness. And it is solely of his free grace, that he sent his Son Jesus, gave him miraculous powers, and qualified him to be the spiritual Saviour of mankind. It is solely of his free grace, that he raised the crucified Lord of glory from the dead, exhibited him to competent witnesses, qualified his apostles to publish the history of a divine revelation, and preserved the gospel unimpaired to the present times. It is solely of his free grace, that he now invites us all to come to the fountain of truth and be cleansed from our moral pollution, that he offers the assistance of his holy spirit to all who seek for it in sincerity, and that he aids us in forming christian characters. For all these unspeakable blessings, we can make him no returns; for he is a per-

fect being, and cannot be benefited by the services of his imperfect children. If we refuse to improve these means to our own progress in holiness, we shall not be saved; but we can blame no one but ourselves; for we are all invited to approach the table of spiritual bread and water. We all have ability to comply with the invitation. We are all encouraged by the most animating motives. And we are assured there can be no other way of becoming happy, but by using our own powers in the acquisition of holiness. Although salvation is of free grace, it can be experienced only by those who cultivate christian knowledge, virtue, and piety.

IV. Thus have I endeavored to answer the three important questions— What is christian salvation? By whom are we saved? And by what means is our salvation effected? The answers returned naturally suggest several important reflections.

1. From what has been said, we learn the grand design of our Saviour's mission and death. We learn that he labored, taught, suffered and died, to save us from our sins, and to assist us in acquiring a holy character, so that we might here enjoy the happiness for which we were created, and be qualified for heavenly felicity hereafter. And he would accomplish this plan of infinite mercy, by inducing us to fulfil the various duties of our several relations. Now we are related to our Creator; for we are dependent on his favor for our existence and faculties, for our preservation and support, for our blessings and hopes. Consequently we are bound, by the very laws of our rational and moral nature, to submit to his authority as our Governor, to render him gratitude as our Benefac-

tor, to trust in him as our unchangeable Friend, to love him as our Father, and to worship him as our God; and if we fulfil these obligations our piety yields us the purest felicity. But if we banish our Maker from our thoughts, profane his sacred name and institutions, murmur at his allotments, and violate his commands, our sinfulness produces aggravated misery.—We are also related to our fellow men; for they are also children of our common parent; possessed of the same powers, privileges and rights; and exposed to similar temptations, trials and afflictions. Consequently we are bound to love them as ourselves, to exert ourselves to promote their best welfare, and ever to do unto them in all things as we would have them do unto us; and if we fulfil these obligations, our benevolence gives us substantial happiness. But if we knowingly injure their property, influence, feelings, reputation or character, our wickedness will be attended with certain wretchedness.—We are likewise blessed with the union of animal and spiritual capacities. Consequently we are bound to restrain the propensities, principles and affections of our constitution within the prescribed limits of conscience, reason and revelation; and if we fulfil these obligations, our self-government secures rational enjoyment. But if we give unlawful indulgence to our appetites, desires, passions, and imaginations, our transgression is followed by loss and suffering. Such then are the iniquities from which our Saviour came to redeem us, because they naturally produce severe misery; and such are the good works of which he would make us zealous, because they insure pure and permanent happiness. Consequently the grand design of his mission and death is, to induce us to fulfil the various duties of our several rela-

tions, so that we may avoid the punishment of sin, and obtain the rewards of holiness, both for time and eternity; and thus glorify our Father in heaven.

2. From what has been said, we also learn the great object of the christian ministry. We learn that this object is, to aid in fulfilling our Saviour's mission and death. Consequently the minister of Christ will habitually endeavor to persuade his hearers to forsake and avoid sin, and to acquire and exhibit holiness. And to effect this important purpose, he will clearly explain to them the nature of sin; and make them feel that it punishes the sinner, even in this world, by subjecting him, either to loss of health, property and reputation; or to the suspicion and contempt of his fellow men; or to the severe compunctions of an accusing conscience, or to the excruciating agonies of a miserable death. He will also explain the nature of holiness; and make them perceive that it rewards the obedient disciple even in this world, by securing the approbation of his own mind; the esteem of the wise and virtuous; the means of usefulness and respectability, and the necessary preparation for the time of trouble, and the season of affliction, and the hour of dissolution. He will likewise lay before them the claims of Jesus; his untiring services and disinterested sacrifices; his spotless example and heavenly spirit; his divine instructions and cruel sufferings; his ignominious death and triumphant resurrection; and he will entreat them, by all that is tender and affecting in his whole history, to become his sincere disciples. He will further present to their consideration the paternal character of their Father in heaven; the unmerited blessings with which he crowns their days; the surpassing love which prompted him to send his

Son to be their Saviour; the manifold consolations he has furnished for their sufferings and afflictions; the unfading inheritance which he has provided for their eternal residence; and he will beseech them, by all that is interesting and moving in his dispensations and perfections, to become "lovers of God as dear children." And finally, he will strive to bring forward all the moral influences of our holy religion. He will not "shun to declare the whole counsel of the Lord." Especially, he will not fail to keep them in remembrance of the righteous retributions of eternity — that great doctrine of Christianity, which its heavenly Founder so plainly taught in this solemn declaration; "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." And to their moral and religious improvement, he will cheerfully devote all his time and talents, all his thoughts and exertions; nay—he will not "count his life dear unto himself, so that he may finish his course with joy, and fulfil" the holy purposes of "the ministry which he has received from the Lord Jesus."

3. From what has been said, we likewise learn the chief duty of hearers. It is, to aid the minister in accomplishing the merciful design of our Saviour's mission and death. Let me then address all such in the words of inspiration. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Your duty is plain. "Keep the commandments." "Cease to do evil, and learn to do well." Ever avoid what you know to be wrong. Always practise what you believe to be right. Regularly attend upon the services of the sanctuary. Prepare yourselves to be edi-

fied by all its exercises. Feelingly engage in the public devotions. Listen candidly to all evangelical instructions. Bring home to your own consciences every thing applicable to your wants. Carry much of the spirit of the sabbath into the week. Frequently scrutinize your whole character. Attentively compare the habitual state of your thoughts, motives, feelings, affections, conversation and conduct with the divine standard. Speedily reform whatever you discover amiss in your hearts or lives. Quickly supply whatever you find defective in your faith or practice. Confirm and strengthen whatever you possess according to truth and godliness. And never imagine that you have arrived at perfection ; but forgetting your past acquirements, press forward most zealously to higher and still higher degrees of christian knowledge and holiness. And be not discouraged at opposing obstacles. For your work is not only so plain, that the fool cannot honestly err therein ; but it is so practicable, that no excuse of inability will ever be admitted at the bar of conscience or heaven. Your Father remembers that you are dust, and he does not require impossibilities of his frail children. Bring to your aid, therefore, all the motives of the blessed gospel. Keep in mind the glorious rewards which await those who persevere unto the end, and the awful punishments threatened upon the disobedient. Place the perfect example of your divine Master ever before you. Recollect that the same apostle who commands you to work out your salvation, also assures you, that "God worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." Remember that a greater than Paul declares for your encouragement, that "your heavenly Father is more ready to give you his holy spirit, than earthly parents are to

give good gifts to their children." If then you seek spiritual influences in sincerity and truth; if you labor in the work of moral improvement with untiring perseverance; if you continue in the plain paths of gospel salvation; you will aid your minister in accomplishing the great object of his ministry; and your exertions will be crowned with present and everlasting salvation.

4. From what has been said, we further learn to determine whether we ourselves, and those around us, have experienced christian salvation. If we adhere to the direction of our Saviour, we shall find no difficulty on this question. For if we are sober, chaste, meek and humble, we are surely saved from intemperance, impurity, anger and pride. If we are just, candid, forgiving and benevolent, we are certainly saved from dishonesty, bigotry, revenge and covetousness. If we love, serve and worship our heavenly Father, we are undoubtedly saved from impiety, ingratitude and disobedience. If we imitate the example, imbibe the spirit, and obey the instructions of Christ Jesus, we are indeed saved from unbelief, hypocrisy and condemnation. But on the other hand, if we slight his invitations, disregard his precepts, and contemn his authority, we manifestly do not possess christian knowledge, virtue and piety. And so also, if we wish to know whether any particular neighbor or acquaintance is a subject of gospel salvation, we need not inquire into the length or soundness of his religious creed; for if his faith influences him to forsake iniquity and acquire holiness, it answers for him all the purposes of salvation; but if it does not produce these results, be it called heterodox, or orthodox, it is no better to him "than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." We need not inquire to

what denomination of believers he belongs; for if his heart is pure and his habits virtuous, his salvation is already accomplished; but if this be not the case, the name of his sect will work no miracles for him at death, and he will be accounted as nothing at the bar of heaven. We need not inquire what his religious experiences have been; for if he exhibit the christian character, no other evidence is needed; but if he cannot furnish this scriptural proof of election, all the experiences in creation are of no service whatever. We need not inquire if he has been born again; for unless we see the marks of the new birth in his temper and conduct, all the professions in the world should give no satisfaction; but with this evidence, all other testimony is unnecessary and superfluous. We have an inspired rule by which to measure his moral condition. "By their fruits shall ye know them." The moral and religious character is the only standard of salvation furnished by our appointed judge. And let the sectarian creed of our friend be what it may; let him belong to what denomination he pleases; let him relate what experiences he can; let him make what professions he chooses; all these are nothing in the account. For so far as he commits sin, so far will his sin punish him; and so far as he acquires holiness, so far will his holiness reward him. He will, therefore, enjoy just so much of heaven as he possesses of moral goodness, and no more; and he will suffer just so much of hell as he possesses of moral depravity, and no more. Consequently, he is saved just so far as he is holy, and no farther; and he is damned just so far as he is sinful, and no farther. This is true in life; it is true in death; and it must be true in eternity

5. From what has been said, we finally learn that innocence or reformation is the only method of escaping the punishment of sin. We may indeed commit sin with the expectation of avoiding its consequences. We may employ the darkness of night, and the secrecy of the grave, to conceal our iniquity. And for a time we may elude the detection of our fellow mortals. But when we are least aware, some event may occur, some circumstance may arise, which shall reveal our infamy and our disgrace to the world.—We may commit sin; we may conceal it from every human being but ourselves; our labors may be crowned with success; the voice of gladness may be heard in our dwellings; the world may lay her riches and her honors at our feet. But with all that time has to offer, we shall still be miserable. For our wickedness will have left a corroding disease on our very soul. And we shall carry a hell in our own bosom which no earthly offerings can ever quench or smother.—We may commit sin; we may affirm that all actions are alike; we may ridicule religion, and scoff at all sacred things; we may plunge into the very vortex of dissipation, and pass along the briery road of transgression, until arrested by the summons of death. But his cold hand will dissipate all the mists of infidelity and depravity. A knowledge of our desperate wickedness will fill our souls with agony; and convulsive cries for mercy will tremble on our quivering lips. — We may commit sin; we may sear our consciences so as to pass even the portal of the grave in our delusion. But when the light of eternity bursts upon our guilty souls, we shall come to a knowledge of ourselves; our wilful disobedience, our sinful pollution, our

wretched condition. And a sense, a realizing sense, of our lost and ruined state, must fill our souls with "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." How can we then escape the natural consequences of our profligate course? Can we then flee from our own thoughts? Can we then desert our own reflections? Can we then escape from our own souls? Can we then hide from the inspection of an omniscient and omnipresent God? Oh no. There is no escape from misery but in innocence or reformation. It is not in the power of Jesus to deliver us from the punishment of sin in any other way. He came not to make us happy in our iniquities. This he could not do. This God himself will not do. He must first aid us in becoming good, before we can possibly be happy. Sin and unhappiness are eternally inseparable. As well may we expect to unite heaven and hell, as hope to make a depraved soul happy in any way but by reformation. Let me therefore beseech all who are guilty, — and who is not? let me entreat you, as you value your present and eternal salvation, to forsake and avoid sin, to acquire and exhibit holiness. For 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'

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THE

DIVINITY

OF

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THE

DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

It is proposed in this tract to explain the scriptural doctrine of our Lord's divinity. We address it to those Christians, who are prejudiced against the Unitarian system, on account of its supposed rejection of this doctrine. We trust that a candid examination of our real views will convince them that we believe in the divinity of our blessed Lord, as taught in the record which God hath given of his Son.

1. Let us inquire what is the divinity which the scriptures attribute to Jesus Christ. The leading ideas which they inculcate on this point, as we expect to prove, may be comprehended under the following heads.

1. Jesus is divine, because he came with a divine commission. He was sanctified by the Father, and sent into the world as his immediate messenger. The offices which he bore, for the redemption of the world, were not assumed upon his own authority, but were assigned him by the authority of the Father. He was not like those benefactors, who confer favors upon their country or upon mankind, through the impulses of a patriotic or benevolent spirit; but he was divinely set apart for the momentous service which he was to perform, and received his commission from the inspiration of God.

2. Jesus is divine, because he was divinely instructed. The wisdom with which he spake was not his own, but was given him by his Father. The system of truth, which he revealed, was communicated to him from heaven. His words are to us the words of God, his commands the commands of God; since we believe that God spake by him; entrusted him with his commandments; and taught him the doctrines which he revealed to the world.

3. Jesus is divine on account of the divinity of his character. In his moral excellence he was a ray of the divine brightness, and the express image of the divine perfections. He was sanctified to a degree, which though men may emulate they cannot fully attain. So holy, so spiritual, so divine, was his character, that it conveys to us the best idea we can form of the character of the Deity. In his disposition, his feelings, his affections, he was one with the Father; God dwelt in him, and he in God.

Such is the divinity which the scriptures attribute to our Saviour—a divinity of commission, of doctrine, and of character. You may ask, if in addition to this, the doctrine of our Lord's divinity does not imply that he was the true God. By no means. In the first place, this is not required by the meaning of the language. According to the common use of words, there is an important distinction between deity and divinity. We apply the term deity only to the self-existent and independent God. We apply the term divinity to whatever is peculiarly and intimately related to the self-existent and independent God. Thus we speak of the divinity of the Holy Scriptures; meaning, that they contain doc-

trines which came from God; but we never speak of their deity. We speak of the divinity of the Mosaic dispensation, and of the Christian religion; meaning that they were established by God; but we never speak of their deity. In like manner, we speak of the divinity of Christ, according to the explanation just given; but never, so long as we abide by the declarations of the bible, can we speak of the deity of Christ. The bible constantly observes the distinction between the terms, in its views of our Saviour. While it represents him as commissioned, instructed, and sanctified by God, at the same time, it represents him as a different being from God, dependent upon him for his wisdom, authority, and power; and inferior to him, as the being sent is inferior to him who sends; as the son is inferior to the Father; the creature to the Creator.

In the second place, if the divinity of our Saviour be, as we have explained it, a divinity of commission, doctrine, and character, it is impossible that he should possess the original attributes of the Deity. The force of the scriptural arguments, which we shall presently adduce, cannot be evaded by the assertion, that you admit the doctrine which they support, but at the same time you believe, in addition, that Jesus Christ is the omnipotent Deity; since if you attempt this to avoid the difficulty, you fall into one still greater. You must have recourse to the common distinction of a double nature, in the person of our Lord, and then argue that some things are true of him as a man, which are not true of him as God. But this distinction has been often shown to be contradictory. A moment's reflection will convince you that it is not tenable. For instance, — to use

one argument out of many that might be offered — the New Testament represents our Saviour as one undivided being, and asserts things of his whole nature, without any limit or qualification, which, if your hypothesis be correct, cannot escape the charge of inconsistency or falsehood. Observe, the New Testament never speaks of attributes which Jesus Christ possessed as man, and other attributes which he possessed as God ; but it speaks of him, as an individual, without reference to any complex nature, without any restriction or explanation. For example ; Jesus Christ declares that 'the Father is greater than he.' He does not say, greater than he is as a man ; but the proposition is unconditional, absolute. Now if Jesus had been equal to the Father, by virtue of a double nature, his assertion would not have been true ; for if the divine and human natures were blended in one person, the humanity would bear no assignable proportion to the deity ; and our Lord would not declare of himself, his whole nature, what was true only of a part of his nature, and that part bearing the proportion to the whole of finite to infinite.

We beg you then to bear in mind that if the account which we have given of our Lord's divinity, and which we are about to prove, be scriptural, the hypothesis of his supreme deity must be unscriptural. It is impossible that they can both be true. If our Lord was commissioned, sanctified, and instructed by the only God, he cannot be the only God, by whom he was commissioned, sanctified, and instructed. If he was the prophet foretold of old time, to be sent from God, he cannot be the God who sent the prophet. If the divinity of Jesus is subordinate, it cannot be supreme, unless the same

being can at once be God and not God; can be born of a woman in the fulness of time, and self-existent from eternity; can support the universe by his power, while he was crucified on Calvary by his creatures. These contradictions you must admit, as long as you maintain the hypothesis of two natures in Christ; and unless you maintain this hypothesis, you must prove that the scriptural arguments, which we shall now present, are fallacious and inconclusive, or give your assent to the doctrine, that the divinity of our Lord is a divinity of commission, doctrine, and character.

II. We will now advance the evidence from the scriptures in proof of this position. We shall appeal to the prophecies respecting our Saviour; to his own testimony concerning himself; to the testimony of the Jews, who heard his teachings; and to the testimony of the disciples, who were convinced by them.

1. What is the testimony of the prophecies respecting our Saviour? Do they predict that the Messiah is to be God, or a messenger sent from God? Do they foretel his deity or his divinity? Plainly, as you will perceive, the latter. Look first at the prediction of Moses. 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken. — And the Lord said unto me, I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.' Deut. xviii. 15, 17, 18. Who is here predicted? Is it not a prophet — one like unto Moses — raised up from his brethren — with the words of God in his mouth —

and speaking all that the Lord commands him? Do these conditions apply to the supreme God? If the Deity had left the throne of the universe, to die for his creatures, as we sometimes hear it asserted; if our Saviour had been in reality the eternal and independent God, could this prophecy have been applied to him? Surely it is not God who was raised up; who was made like unto Moses; who spake the words which he received. You cannot suppose this for a moment. If, then, our Saviour was God he did not fulfil this prophecy. If he did fulfil the prophecy, then he was not God, but, as we believe, a divinely commissioned messenger. Now, did our Saviour fulfil this prophecy? Read the application of it by the apostle Peter. 'He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you.' Preached before. And where preached before? Why, in the very prediction which we have quoted. For, continues Peter, 'Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you.' Acts iii. 20, 22 And now, the apostle adds, this prophecy is fulfilled. For 'unto you first, God having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' Acts iii. 26.

This scriptural proof seems to us of great importance. We beg of you to look at it with attention. Examine it as it was understood and applied by Peter. Moses predicts to his people that God will, at a future time, raise up and qualify a prophet, whom they shall hear. He describes his character. He represents him as deriving his authority from the Lord his God. He declares, in

language that cannot be mistaken, that he is to be subordinate and dependent. Peter applies the prediction to Jesus Christ. Could he have done so, had he regarded him as the omnipotent God? There can be but one answer. We have then the testimony of Moses and of Peter, that the divinity of the Messiah does not involve his deity, but merely a divine commission, divine instruction, and divine character.

Let us look at another prophecy. 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.' Isaiah xlii. 1, 2, 3. Of whom does the prophet here speak? Of the independent God? Clearly not. But of the chosen servant of God. The messenger of the Most High, with the spirit of the Lord upon him. And this prediction is applied to Jesus of Nazareth, by the evangelist Matthew, in the twelfth chapter of his Gospel. It is applied to him as the authorized prophet and servant of Jehovah, in a manner which incontestably proves that neither the prophet nor the evangelist regarded the Messiah as the supreme God.

Again, in the sixty first chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, we have this description of the Messiah, as a religious teacher. 'The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and

the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.'—Isaiah lxi. 1, 2. In this passage the prophet evidently alludes, not to the Supreme God, but to a person commissioned by him; not to one who came of himself, but to one, who was sent by the Lord, and in whom his spirit dwelt. But in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, it is recorded that Jesus Christ, having read these words in the synagogue, declared, 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.' Luke iv. 21, 22. The testimony of the prophet is thus confirmed by the authority of Jesus himself. We have their united evidence that the divinity of the Messiah is a divinity of commission, doctrine, and character.

Again, the fifty third chapter of Isaiah is considered one of the most distinct and intelligible predictions of the Messiah, which is contained in the Old Testament. What is the nature of the person there foretold? Does the prophet speak of the descent of Jehovah upon the earth, or of the appearance of a messenger, whom Jehovah should raise up? Read his words. 'He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.—He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.—And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his

death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.'— Isaiah liii. 2, 3, 7, 9.

Let the reader judge whether this prediction is fulfilled on the supposition that Jesus Christ is the eternal and unchangeable God, or that he was the anointed Messenger of the Most High, the great deliverer, who laid down his life for his friends, and who was made perfect through suffering. And how did the first preachers of the gospel understand this prophecy? We are told, that as the Ethiopian eunuch was reading in his chariot the prophecy of Isaiah, he was joined by Philip, in order that he might assist him to understand what he read. When he came to the words which have been quoted, he asks Philip, 'I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus.' The Ethiopian was convinced. He desires to be baptized. He professes his faith in Jesus Christ. But, did he consider him as the Almighty God? No. 'I believe,' said he, 'that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' Here, then, we have a threefold proof of the position which we maintain. Isaiah foretells, Philip explains, the Ethiopian convert believes, the divinity of our Lord, as a divinity of commission, doctrine, and character, and no more. — Acts viii. 34, 35, 37.

We will adduce one more argument from prophecy, and conclude this part of our discussion. 'Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.' — Mal. iii. 1.

Now if our Saviour was the Lord of Hosts, he did not fulfil this prophecy, unless the person who sends, and the person who is sent, can be the same; unless the Lord of Hosts can be his own messenger. But admit that our Saviour was not Jehovah, but the messenger of Jehovah, the application of the prophecy is direct and easy. It suggests nothing inconsistent or contradictory. It presents a clear and intelligible idea of the Messiah as the servant of God, the great messenger of his grace, and the teacher of his will.

Such is our argument from prophecy. We think it cannot fail to convince the candid inquirer, that the divinity of the Messiah, as predicted by the ancient prophets, does by no means involve the attributes of the Deity; but only a divine commission, instruction and character.

2. We come now to the second branch of the argument,— the testimony of our Saviour himself. Did he teach his hearers that he was divine because he was the Infinite God, or because he was sanctified, commissioned, and instructed by God? Let us appeal to his own words. The first remarkable testimony to which we shall refer is the reply of our Saviour to Peter's confession at Cesarea Philippi. 'He asked his disciples, who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered, and said unto him, blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, who is in Heaven.' —Matt. xvi. 13—16.

It will be observed in this passage that Peter does not recognise Jesus as the Almighty God. He does not say,— thou art God, who should become incarnate and descend upon earth,— but 'thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' He does not confess his belief in the deity of our Saviour; but in the divinity of his commission. It was as the anointed messenger of God, that he acknowledged his Master. This acknowledgment received the blessing of Jesus, and this proves that our Lord claimed no other divinity than that of the Son of God, the predicted Messiah. His approbation of Peter's confession is his own testimony to the divinity which he possessed. Had he been the Almighty God himself, instead of his Son, is it credible that no hint of it should here have been given?

The next passage, which we shall select from a multitude of similar import, is in the twelfth chapter of John's Gospel. 'Jesus cried and said, he that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father, which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.'—John, xii. 44, 45. 49, 50. Now what does this passage prove? Clearly that our Lord claimed divinity as connected with, and commissioned by, the Father who sent him; and as clearly, that in his divinity he was dependent upon God, subordinate to him, and instructed by him.

Another passage is from the solemn prayer in which Jesus commends his disciples to God. 'Father, the

hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him; and this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.'—John xvii. 1, 2, 3. Our Saviour here testifies to his own divinity, as depending on his connexion with God. He declares that he has power over all flesh; but that this power is given him by the Father. He decides the question as to his identity with the Deity, by saying that the Father is the only true God, and that he is sent by him. Words could not be plainer than these, which represent the divinity of our blessed Lord, as the gift of his heavenly Father; a divinity, not original, not inherent, not supreme, but a divinity of commission and character. We might proceed to further quotations from the testimony of Jesus Christ. But we have already presented a fair specimen of his mode of speaking with regard to himself. His uniform, obvious declaration concerning his divinity is, that he is the Christ of God. Not a shadow of a hint do we find, that he laid claim to anything more. Let us take heed how we reject or undervalue the testimony of this 'faithful and true witness.'

3. We will now appeal to the testimony of the Jews, to whom our Saviour addressed his instructions. What were their views of the character of Jesus Christ, received from his own declarations? Their original expectations, as it is well known, were of a temporal prince, who should sit upon the throne of his father David, and restore the kingdom to Israel. These expectations our Saviour took every occasion to discour-

age. He expressly declares that his kingdom is not of this world; that the honors which he is to bestow, are spiritual honors; the rewards which he offers, the rewards of heaven. But in disdaining the character of a victorious monarch, our Lord did not assume the attributes of the Deity. He presents himself to the Jews as a divinely commissioned messenger, a spiritual teacher; and as such they understood him; as such they rejected him, as such, by wicked hands, he was crucified and slain.

The first instance which we shall quote, in proof of this, is from the third chapter of John's Gospel. A man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night and confessed to him his belief in his divine authority. He had been convinced by the mighty works of our Saviour, that he was indeed what he professed to be; and he comes to Jesus, and makes his acknowledgment. Now what does he confess? Of what was he convinced? Of the supreme deity of Jesus Christ? Not at all. 'Rabbi,' said he, 'we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.' He had heard the instructions of Jesus Christ; he had seen his works; he bowed to his authority. He declared his belief, not in the deity of our Lord, but in the divinity of his mission and doctrine. So strong was his conviction, that he desired to learn more fully the character of the religion, in an interview with its teacher; and the result was that he became a constant disciple, and testified his attachment to his Master, by performing the last rites to his body, after the other disciples had forsaken him and fled. But if

the faith of this converted Pharisee, we discover no traces of any other divinity in our Lord, than that of commission, doctrine, and character.

We have another instance in the sixth chapter of John. Jesus performs a miracle in feeding the multitude. The beholders are impressed with the display of divine power. For the time they are convinced of his authority. They declare their faith. 'When they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, they said, This is, of a truth, that prophet, that should come into the world.'—John vi. 14. This is their confession;—not of God, not of an incarnate Deity; but of that prophet, who should come into the world. The divinity of this prophet we have already explained.

Another instance is from the ninth chapter of John. Jesus had performed a miracle in the cure of a man who was born blind. The notoriety of the miracle excited the attention of our Lord's enemies, and was immediately made the subject of controversy. The question between them and those who were disposed to believe on Jesus was, whether this miracle proved him to have been sent from God. Observe, no mention is made of his deity. Observe, that neither friend nor enemy alludes to the idea, which has prevailed in modern times, that our Saviour claimed to be the Almighty. All they thought of was, whether he were or were not the prophet of the Almighty. When he that had been blind was questioned concerning his cure, he replied, 'A man called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes; and I received sight.' He was then brought before the Pharisees and gave the same account. Upon being asked what he thought of Jesus,

he answered, he is a prophet. His parents feared to confess this, because the Jews had agreed, that if any man acknowledged that he was the Messiah, he should be cast out of the synagogue. In farther conversation between the Pharisee, and the man, upon whom the miracle had been performed, the same question is at issue between them; namely, whether Jesus were the promised Messiah or not. The Pharisees say, 'God spake by Moses, we know; but as for this person, we know not whence he is.' The man replies, 'If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.' Then they cast him out of the synagogue. Jesus, having heard of it, found the man, and said unto him, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered, who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him. Jesus said, thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.' — John ix. 1—38.

Now this whole narrative is remarkable for the clearness, with which it combines the testimony of Jesus respecting himself, and the manner in which that testimony was understood, both by the Pharisees and by the subject of the miracle. From the beginning to the end of this account, there is nothing which can suggest the idea of the identity of Jesus with God; no intimation is given of a divine nature; but the whole controversy turns upon the truth of the divinity of his mission; this our Saviour asserts; this the Pharisees deny; this the man who had been born blind, confesses. With this, express testimony, can you suppose that our Saviour claimed to be the Almighty God? Can you deem an acknowledgment of his divinity, as the Son of God, an insufficient title to the character of his disciple?

Another proof of the opinions given by our Lord to the Jews concerning himself, is taken from the reasons which they offered for his crucifixion. When the exasperated priests and Pharisees demanded of Pilate the life of the innocent victim, Pilate answers, 'take ye him and crucify him, for I find no fault in him.' The Jews replied, 'We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.' Now can we suppose, that if our Lord had made any claims to the attributes of the Deity, his enemies, eager to find a reproach against him, would have left this unnoticed? Recollect the peculiar jealousy of the Jewish nation in this period of their history, with regard to their object of worship; their abhorrence of idolatry; their zeal to vindicate the unity and supremacy of Jehovah, the God of their fathers. Can you believe, that if they were authorized, by the teachings of Jesus, to regard him as asserting his equality with God, they would not have triumphantly seized upon this fact as a conclusive proof of their accusation of blasphemy? But they bring no such proof before the tribunal of Pilate. They do not accuse our Saviour of making himself God. They knew that they could not sustain such an allegation. They assert only, 'He ought to die because he made himself the Son of God.' Not a word nor a hint do we hear of his being, or of his claiming to be, the Almighty God. — John xix. 6, 7.

You will consider this the more remarkable when you remember, that at one period of our Saviour's ministry, the Jews endeavored to fix the imputation of blasphemy upon him, because, as they said, 'that he, being a man, made himself God.' They wilfully misconstrue his lan-

guage, in order to make it appear that he asserted his claim to the supreme attributes of the Deity. But he uniformly disclaims such an interpretation. While he maintains with singular power his claims to a divine commission, with equal power he declares, that the 'Father who sent him is greater than he.' We have two instances of the Jews attempting to convict our Lord of blasphemy. The first is in the fifth chapter of John's Gospel. Jesus, on the sabbath day, had performed the miracle of healing an infirm man. The Jews persecuted him, and sought to slay him, because he had done it on the sabbath. Jesus said, in answer to their reproaches, 'my Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore they sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also, that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.' The charge here brought is explicit, and, had it been well founded, would not our Lord have confessed it? Would he have attempted to throw it off? Mark his words;—'Verily, verily, I say unto you, the *Son can do nothing of himself*, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth.' After this explicit declaration of dependence upon God, Jesus mentions several important particulars in which the Father had given him power, and then adds, 'I can of *mine own self do nothing;* as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent me.'—John v. 17, 18, 19, 20. 30.

This plain, open, direct denial of our Saviour, of an equality with God, may seem sufficient to have convinced

the Jews that he made no pretensions to the attributes of the Deity. They were, however, still anxious to support the charge they had brought against him. Accordingly, they sought to ensnare him by words, and not long after, we find them again attempting to convict him of blasphemy. We have the account of this in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel. In a conversation with the Jews, Jesus declared, 'I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones to stone him. Jesus answered them, many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me. The Jews answered him, for a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.' Observe the reply of our Lord. At once he repels the charge; he claims no authority as God, but as the Son of God; he justifies his title to the latter character; for, alluding to those passages in the Old Testament in which kings and magistrates are called gods he answers, 'is it not written in your law, I said ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, do ye say of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the SON OF GOD?'—John x. 30—36.

Consider well this reply of our Saviour. Can you have a clearer proof that he claimed only the authority of the Son of God—the Messenger, whom the Father sanctified and sent? The Jews, it appears, were convinced by it that their accusation could not be supported. We find, after this, no attempt to fasten upon Jesus the charge of blasphemy, from his making himself equal with God; for they could not but understand him as asserting, not the deity of his nature, but the divinity of his mission and doctrine.

4. The last branch of evidence, which we wish to lay before you, is the testimony of the apostles after the resurrection of our Lord. This testimony completes the proof which the New Testament affords of the divinity of our Lord, as commissioned and instructed by the Father. For it is sometimes said, that during the life of our Saviour he did not make a full disclosure of his deity; but left it to be declared by his apostles, after the descent of the holy spirit, which was promised to 'lead them into all truth.' We are willing to place the question on this ground. Let us then inquire what the inspired apostles taught after their spiritual illumination, when they went forth to preach 'the gospel of the kingdom' to Jew and Gentile.*

Did they assert the deity of our Lord's nature, or the divinity of his mission? Look first at the account contained in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. On the memorable day of Pentecost, immediately after the effusion of the holy spirit, Peter stands up in the midst of the Jews, and thus addressed them;—'Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as

* We have confined ourselves to the preaching of the Apostles, as it may be gathered from the book of the Acts, because we think this evidence sufficient to establish our position: because we wish to make this discussion as short as may be consistent with its object, and because a previous tract of the Amer. Unit. Assoc. No. 19, of the first series—'The Apostle Paul a Unitarian,'—contains a review of the testimony which may be drawn from by far the greater portion of the epistolary writings of the New Testament.

ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death.—Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the holy ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.—Therefore, let the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.'—Acts ii. 22, 23, 24. 33. 36.

This is the first recorded discourse of the apostles to the Jews after the ascension of our Lord. It was delivered on an occasion which demanded a full and explicit statement of the authority and claims of Jesus Christ. If he was believed at this time to have been the supreme God, it is utterly incredible that the apostle should not have distinctly declared it. But we find no such declaration. On the contrary, the whole reasoning of the apostle is on the supposition, that our Saviour's authority depended not on a divine nature, but on a divine commission. Look again at the apostle's language. 'Jesus of Nazareth—a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him,—whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death,—this same Jesus whom ye have crucified, God hath made both Lord and Christ.' Can you suppose that the inspired apostle used this language concerning one whom he believed to be God, or equal to God, or, in any mysterious way, possessed of the infinite attributes of the Deity? Is his language even intelligible upon that supposition? Would it have

conveyed anything like correct ideas to the Jews, whom he addressed? On the other hand, remember that our Lord claimed only the divinity of a heaven-sent mission, and that Peter preached him only as a divine messenger, and his language is clear and forcible. No mystery rests upon it. Every difficulty is removed. The whole discourse is what we should expect from the zealous apostle, earnestly enforcing his master's claims to a divine mission and divine authority.

We have taken this proof from Peter's first address to the Jews. We appeal now to the first address of the same apostle to the Gentiles. After the remarkable circumstances detailed in the tenth chapter of Acts, the centurion Cornelius, and his friends and kinsmen, were assembled to hear the gospel from the lips of Peter. 'Now, therefore,' said this sincere inquirer, 'are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.' And Peter immediately proceeds to deliver his message as an apostle of Christ. 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.—Whom the Jews slew, and hanged on a tree; him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly.—And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he, which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.'—Acts x. 33. 38, 39, 40. 43.

Observe the object of the apostle's declaration;—to make known the gospel of Christ for the first time to a devout Gentile. Is it not wonderful that he should omit altogether the idea of our Lord's deity, had such

an idea a place in his mind? Would it have been just to the centurion, to have left him in ignorance of that doctrine, which, if true, must certainly have been deemed of the very first importance? But not a word, nor a hint, with regard to the supreme deity of our Lord can you discover. Nothing, that by any mode whatever can be converted into an intimation of it. No. The apostle preaches to Cornelius, 'Jesus Christ and him crucified.' Not, Jesus the coeternal and coequal Son of God, but 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Not Jesus claiming independent authority, but 'Jesus, anointed by God with the holy spirit and with power.' Not Jesus the self-existent Jehovah, but 'Jesus ordained of God, to be the Judge of quick and dead.' Can you ask for stronger proof that the divinity of Christ was only that of character and commission?

We will now examine the testimony of Paul. The first account we have of his public labors, is, that soon after his conversion 'he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.' Acts ix. 20. Observe, Paul declares not that he was supreme, but subordinate; not God, but the Son of God. This was the commencement of his ministry. Look at its progress. At Antioch, we find Paul preaching Christ, 'that of the seed of David hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus;' whom when the Jews slew, 'God raised him from the dead.' Acts xiii. 23. 30. At Thessalonica, that 'Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.' Acts xvii. 3. At Athens, that 'he is the man, whom God had ordained. to judge the world in righteousness.'

Acts xvii. 31. And to sum up all, in his own account before Agrippa, we have the character of his preaching as follows. 'Having, therefore, obtained help from God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.' Acts xxvi. 22, 23. Such is the testimony of Paul. It is, you will perceive, full, clear, and conclusive, in support of the truth, which we have offered to your attention. Not one word do you find in it concerning the supreme deity of our Lord; not one word concerning his equality with the Father; not one word, implying more than the divinity of his commission, his doctrine, and his character.

We have now laid before you a portion of the evidence, upon which we have formed our opinions concerning the divinity of our blessed Lord. It is derived, as you have seen, from the testimony of the ancient prophets; of Jesus Christ himself; of the Jews, his enemies; and of his chosen apostles. To this testimony we bow with implicit confidence; and when asked, what think ye of Christ, we feel authorized by it to say, with Peter, he is THE SON OF GOD. More than this we dare not say; more than this we dare not believe; for we can find no authority for it in that gospel, 'which was written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, THE SON OF GOD, and that believing, we might have life through his name.'

We will close this discussion, by offering to you four suggestions, which we beg you to bear in mind, when reflecting on the force of our arguments.

1. You perceive that our sentiments on the divinity of Jesus Christ are derived, not from the instructions of human reason, but from the light of the sacred scriptures. You may have been told that we exalt reason at the expense of revelation, and therefore reject the deity of Christ, the trinity, and other kindred doctrines. But you have been misinformed. We fear that some may have thought it their duty to keep you in the dark, respecting our religious views. We have accordingly been represented as obtaining them from other sources besides the bible. Of the truth of this, you have now an opportunity to judge for yourselves. In the preceding pages you have seen, that we have supported our opinions entirely from a comparison of scripture with scripture. We hold to these with the deepest conviction of their truth, because we believe that they are proved by the obvious, unembarrassed, indisputable testimony of the whole bible, while the passages that appear to oppose them, are few in number, obscure in their connexion, and always susceptible of an interpretation, which reconciles them with the general tenor of holy writ.

2. You perceive, from the discussion in which we have engaged, the fallacy of the charge which is sometimes brought against us, that we regard our Saviour as a mere man. You may have been told that this is our belief. But, as you have now seen, the assertion is groundless. You understand, that in rejecting the unscriptural doctrine of our Saviour's deity, we, by no

means, deny the scriptural doctrine of his divinity. You perceive that there is a medium between regarding Jesus as the Eternal God and as a common man. You perceive that he sustains relations, appointed to him by his Father in heaven, which elevate him far above the ordinary level of humanity, and make him next to God, the most worthy object of our confidence, admiration, and love.

3. You perceive that the doctrine, which we have now presented, is not exposed to the charge of destroying the grounds of christian hope. We do not 'deny the Lord that bought us;' for we believe 'that he was sanctified by the Father, and sent into the world.' We do not deprive the sinner of his Saviour; for we believe that, by the commission of his heavenly Father, Jesus is 'able to save, to the uttermost, all that come to God by him.' We do not make light of the great work of redemption; for we believe that 'the Father sent the Son, to seek and to save them who were lost;' 'not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might have life.' With these views of the mission and character of Jesus Christ, we have a broad foundation for christian hope. We enjoy the spiritual consolation which the soul needs. We repose with perfect confidence in the promises of our Saviour. It is the language of our hearts; 'Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee; thou only hast the words of eternal life;' believing in thee, 'we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.'

4. You perceive that the doctrine of our Lord's divinity is not one of vain speculation. It is important that you should possess distinct and intelligent views

respecting the Saviour, in whom your dearest hopes are centred.—It is important to the strength of your faith. Can you maintain so lively and firm a confidence in Jesus Christ, while his connexion with the Father remains an inscrutable mystery, or is explained only by the strange hypothesis of Three Persons in one God, and two separate natures in one of the Divine Persons, as you can when you acknowledge the Father as the only God, and Jesus Christ as his Messenger and Son?—It is important to the satisfaction of your intellect. You feel a misgiving, we doubt not, at the reception of the popular ideas concerning Jesus Christ. You have never been able, upon close reflection, to reconcile them with the best dictates of your judgment. You have sometimes pondered the contradictions which they involve, until your 'faith was half confounded, and your reason stood aghast.' In the scriptural views which we have presented, you meet with no such difficulties. Your understanding must approve them, while your heart embraces them.—It is important to your devotion. Have you not often felt distracted in attempting to direct your worship to a three-fold God? Has not the spirit of devotion been disturbed by the vain endeavor to make Jesus Christ at once the object and the medium of worship; the being, both to whom and through whom, your prayers were to be addressed? You will be released from this difficulty, by receiving the truths which we have illustrated. You will enjoy free, unembarrassed and delightful communion with God, through Jesus Christ his Son. You will be among the true worshippers, who 'worship the FATHER in spirit and in truth.'

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THE

GENIUS OF CHRISTIANITY.

When Christianity was introduced it occasioned a very great sensation. Whole cities were thrown into an uproar at its appearance, and it was said of its preachers that they were turning the world upside down. Christianity was not therefore quietly established, but was introduced into the minds of its first converts amidst great public commotions. The feelings of the early Christians must have partaken fully of that excited tone imparted to every community, in which the voice of our religion was heard.

That the least heed should be given, under these circumstances, to the humble affairs of daily duty, to the common and natural obligations of life, is the last thing to have been expected. We should certainly never think to have found such a one as the Apostle Paul with his way of life and his habits of mind, paying any sort of attention to the ordinary offices of life. But we have only to look into his epistles, those writings from which we obtain the best idea of the feelings and opinions of the Christians of that period, and we shall find that never for a single instant did Christianity permit her converts to lose sight of the common relations of nature and society. Take, for instance, the two epistles to the Thessalonians. At Thessalonica, Paul had preached Christianity at the

imminent hazard of his life, and was near being torn in pieces by a mob. Upon his escape from that city, so soon as he found opportunity, he wrote to the small company of disciples he had collected there. And what is the style of this incorrigible disturber of the public peace? He beseeches his brethren to continue studiously in the quiet performance of their usual duties, giving us to understand that this had been the tenor of his instructions from the first. Listen to his own words. 'We beseech you that ye study to be quiet and to do your own business and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without.' Again in the second epistle. 'Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us, for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you, neither did we eat any man's bread for naught: but wrought with labor and travail that we might not be chargeable to any of you, not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread.'

In this earnest and explicit manner, the Apostle sought to impress upon his brethren the importance of quietness, regularity and good order. Consider what

the character of St Paul was. He was a man of ardent temperament, of great sensibility, and the circumstances into which he had been all along thrown, were such as to encourage and confirm the peculiarities of his original constitution. With a warm and zealous mind, his life had been one uninterrupted scene of excitement. His feelings had been early aroused by the rise of a sect who appeared to him to throw contempt upon his most sacred convictions, upon the religion of his country and his ancestors. And when we recollect the extraordinary means employed by Heaven to bring him to be the most devoted defender of the persecuted faith of Christ, we can hardly conceive how the balance of his mind, with all its awakened sensibilities, was preserved. Follow him in his course as an apostle of Christianity. He journeyed from city to city, over land and over sea, filled with the idea of a great change to be wrought in the world. His mind must have been thronged day and night with the most exciting images. And wherever he appeared, wherever his voice was heard, an extraordinary sensation was produced. Infuriated mobs were collected. He was rescued by military force, carried before magistrates, thrown into prison, beaten, stoned, left for dead, driven from place to place, and confronted with kings. Habituated to such scenes, could his mind descend with any sort of interest to the common realities and familiar details of daily duty? In fine, is it not worthy of remark, does it not give us a noble idea of Christianity, to find her at the stormiest periods, inculcating in a clear and calm voice the homely duties of common life, directing men to be quiet, orderly, to pursue their usual occupations peaceably? While she was aiming at a great

moral revolution, the greatest that can be imagined, and when the human mind must have boiled and foamed around her, like a vexed sea, she partook not of the general excitement, but showed her superiority to it, and did not permit the attention of men to be carried away, as it was naturally and strongly inclined to be, from the present and usual sphere of human duty. She did not allow the eternal lines which mark the natural obligations of man, to be hidden by the flood of feeling that she had called forth.

It is indeed a very singular, a most admirable trait in our holy religion, that while it proposes the greatest objects, deals in the sublimest truths, unfolds the largest views of the moral government of the world, and of the obligations and destiny of man, it takes proper and faithful cognizance of the every day matters of human life. It invests man with new and lofty relations, throws around him an unearthly light, teaches him to consider himself as a celestial intelligence, the offspring of an Infinite Being — eternity his duration, the universe his home. At the same time it does not allow him to forget — it reminds him in a tone clear and forcible, that he is a member of the human family, bound by the common obligations, engaged in the daily labors, perhaps in the lowest manual occupations of human life. The splendors of its revelations, concentrated as they were, were not allowed to obscure, they were made to illuminate the humble sphere of present duty. Christianity is a system at once the most comprehensive and the most simple. While it points to a boundless future, the contemplation of which excites and ravishes the soul, it gives to the present its due importance, and does not permit us to disregard the

claims that are near, however familiar they may be. This I conceive to be the beauty, the spirit, the *genius* of our religion. While it animates us at the prospect of what we are to become hereafter, it adapts itself perfectly to man as he is here.

We perceive this beautiful characteristic of Christianity, particularly as it was exhibited in the first days of our religion, tempering the spirit of the apostles, which everything was conspiring to excite, making it a duty among the new converts, that they should give regular attention to business, live quietly, and perform faithfully the duties of their several vocations. It was not simply the novelty of their situation and their new views and feelings, that were calculated to create a disgust at their old occupations, to render them indisposed to the dull course of their ordinary labors. They might very naturally have conceived, that when the harvest was so great, and the laborers were so few, it was their duty to relinquish their customary pursuits, and to devote themselves to the great work of reformation which had commenced in the world. Plausible as this course must have appeared, when I consider that they did not adopt it; or if they were so inclined, that the apostle, by express injunction,* commanded them to remain, each in the station, no matter how humble and laborious, in which the new religion found him, Christianity receives my profoundest admiration, and I feel that a system so exalting, so calculated, I may say, to excite emotions amounting to rapture, and at the same time so calm, sober and judicious, could not have had a human origin — could not certainly have been introduced by any human means, at that period at

* See particularly 1 Cor. vii. 10 — 22 inclusive.

which Christianity first appeared. In the perfection of its morality, I perceive the impress of a divine hand.

Lest it should be conceived that'I have attached a false value to that characteristic of the religion of the New Testament upon which I have now dwelt, and which I hold to be a genuine token of divinity, I proceed to show that it is not merely in connexion with the times of the apostles, that the peculiar excellence of Christianity is visible. There are many other respects in which it is apparent that we owe particular reverence to Christianity, for the important influence it aims to exert upon man in his most familiar duties, in the common routine of life.

1. In the first place, let it be observed that this trait in the religion of the New Testament is, strictly speaking, peculiar to it--that it belongs in no similar degree to any other system. Compare Christianity with any other religion, in the attention which it bestows upon man's daily conduct, in the fidelity with which it accompanies him down among his most ordinary occupations, and in his usual intercourse with the world, and you will find that it is the spirit of all other religions and of all those false forms which Christianity itself has been made to assume, to make only occasional and partial requisitions of human service--to leave men to themselves, except upon particular days, and with regard to particular exercises. In fact, religion, except under the liberal dispensation of pure Christianity, is a thing by itself, detached from all the concerns of life, consisting of certain observances very imposing perhaps, in the repetition of certain words, in the profession of certain formulas, or in the achievement of great and separate acts of self-denial or charity. It is altogether peculiar to our religion, according to a liberal

construction of it, that it dignifies the whole life, with all its parts, public and private, social and domestic, with the name of religious duty. It teaches us, that in our daily intercourse with one another, in the humblest details, in every matter of conduct, there is a way of acting and feeling, which when a man pursues, he is entitled to the appellation of a religious man, a Christian. It assures us that a religious spirit can be expressed by a quiet and industrious attention to business, as significantly as by a prayer and a solemn rite. In the vocabulary of every other system, religion signifies something separate, sacred, apart; but to the practised ear of an enlightened Christian, it conveys a very different, a much larger meaning. It is but another word for the whole life, with all its business quietly and regularly performed, all its pleasures moderately enjoyed, all its evils patiently borne. It is the general cultivation and happy and constant exercise of one's nature in all those ways in which it was intended to be exercised. It is the healthy putting forth of the affections around their natural objects. It is the enlargement of the character, until it is made to fill all the parts of human duty.

2. If you would have still further evidence how entirely peculiar it is to uncorrupt Christianity, to place the whole life, with all its occurrences, within the sphere of religious obligation, compare the christian system in this respect with the general sentiment of mankind, and see how vastly superior it is. It is the general disposition to make great account of great acts. Our moral judgments are determined by the manner in which men act upon great occasions, and we are apt to place religious excellence altogether in the performance of striking

deeds, and little is thought of the general tenor of a man's life. We can scarcely help thinking well of an individual, if we only know that he is zealous about religious forms, or that he has occasionally done some great act of generosity. Men attach little or no religious value to that form of character which may be exhibited under the common relations of society. If the most that you can say of a man is, that he is a faithful son, or an affectionate brother, or that he is inflexibly upright in his calling — this may be all very well — but it proves nothing in the general mind, as to his possession of the temper and character of a Christian.

Nothing illustrates the general feeling on this point more strikingly than the effect commonly produced upon people's minds in seasons of great religious excitement, when men are more than ordinarily impressed. Then what a disgust is created at that domestic, household religion, that excellence which may be won and exhibited in the common walks of life! How does the excited mind nauseate a humble calling, pant to quit its lowly station, and undertake the office of a spiritual leader. If a want of the requisite qualifications, if the sex of the individual preclude the possession of official weight, still the domestic circle will be deserted, the foot will be turned away from the familiar paths of life, and such exercises will be engaged in, as best accord with the enlivened sensibilities of the mind. The high labors of devotion and exhortation, will be undertaken upon occasions and in places which have all the excitement of publicity without the name.

Thus when men are taking the deepest interest in religion, they only show how superior the moral tone of

Christianity is to their best moral sentiments. The generality of believers have not yet come up to the spiritual import of their religion. The christian system, properly viewed, makes account of our every-day feelings, of manners even, of our social intercourse, of our domestic habits, and attaches to them a religious value, and brings them into the estimate of the character. And if men were really christianised in their sentiments, every revival of religion would be marked by an increased tenderness of conscience, not with regard to devotional acts only — the outward forms and signs of religion, — but to the daily conduct and the natural obligations of human life.

3. In further illustration of our subject, let us observe how perfectly Christianity, in our view of the representations which it makes of human duty, coincides with some of the plainest dictates of reason, some of the clearest conclusions of common sense.

Where we are, we are stationed by our Creator. And from the exquisite wisdom displayed in all his arrangements, the inference is that our duty is *here*, that our chief labor is to be performed in that portion of his vineyard which he has assigned us. And if we look immediately around us, we may find enough to do. Are we children? Then have we parents to honor and comfort. Are we parents? Then have we a great work to do ; to rear minds, the depth of whose resources, and the splendor of whose expectations, transcend our loftiest conceptions. But it is unnecessary to enumerate all the relations in which nature places us. From all of them spring duties. All furnish abundant occupations to our hearts and hands. As then it is the dictate of reason, that the ser-

vice of human life lies among its domestic, social and civil relations, so we cannot fail to honor Christianity, when we find her corroborating this dictate, and pointing to the very same sphere of duty.

4. Again, we infer that our principal duty is close to us, within our personal circle; not only because we find ourselves where we are through the overruling wisdom of God, and have employment enough provided for us in our ordinary duties, but also because it is apparent that, by filling his own place, one may do something for the benefit of the whole family of man. What a host of good influences would be sent through the world, if every individual were to perform the duties of his own station no matter how obscure, to the utmost of his ability. What a lively effect is produced by a bright example of diligence, integrity, and common kindness, upon those who come within its attraction! The young man, just entering upon active life, looks up to him who has won his admiration by his undeviating uprightness and unfaltering perseverance, and his ambition is, to resemble him whom be respects so profoundly. The family, in which good order and good will preside — how lovely it is! and how is every man prompted to arrange his own household upon the same beautiful plan. In a similar way, the beneficial influence that is propagated from individual to individual, and from family to family, spreads from community to community, and from nation to nation. The effect which a country like ours, with its free institutions, has, and is destined to have, upon the general condition of the world, is obviously beyond all estimate. The longer our political prosperity lasts and the more firmly it is consolidated, the more impatient will

the rest of mankind become of the numerous and unnecessary drawbacks upon their liberties and their peace. Let one free and happy community exist, and what can withstand the stirring charm of its example? As the connexion between the individual and his race is thus disclosed, the simple religion of Jesus must appear beautiful and true, when we observe how it aims to make every man fill the place assigned him by Providence, to the best of his ability.

5. But in order to see still more clearly that every man's main duty in life lies among those with whom nature has placed him, suppose yourself for a moment detached from all your present connexions, lifted out of the place you occupy, and carried up to some eminence, where the whole world — the whole field of moral exertion, might be spread out before you. Suppose also, that you were then required to select the scene of your labors — the spot upon which you might endeavor to act upon mankind with the best prospect of success. Now as a man can always exert upon those whose modes of thinking, feeling and speaking, whose habits of life, are in unison with his own, a much readier and surer influence than upon those who are separated from him by foreign ways of thought and action, you would be compelled to return, for the sphere of your efforts, to the very place from which, by the supposition, you had just been withdrawn, for there alone, in your natural circle, would you be surrounded by those whose sympathies and habits are in the closest accordance with your own. In the communication of moral and intellectual good, there is need of some community of thought and feeling between those who give and those who receive. There can be but lit-

tle intercourse that is profitable between those who are separated from each other in all their modes of mental association and of conduct. Our principal duty, therefore, is among those to whom we are most nearly assimilated in all these respects. And with whom do we, generally speaking, most closely sympathise, but with those of our own kindred and tongue, with those who have been subjected to the same influences that have contributed to the formation of our own tastes and habits? Now all this cannot fail to magnify our blessed religion — to increase our reverence for it, when we find its spirit thus identical with the clear and sacred voices of reason and nature.

6. There is yet another consideration, which, by showing that we are to be first and habitually devoted to those who are nearest to us, helps to illustrate the lovely spirit of pure religion; and we cannot omit it. It is a remarkable fact, that while any single instance of distress occurring in our own neighborhood, excites the liveliest sensation, a most extensive and awful calamity taking place in a distant region of the earth, scarcely awakens the most transient emotion. We are bereft of our composure, and overwhelmed with pity, at the sight of an individual suffering before us; but the tidings of some vast city, in a distant portion of the world, laid in ruins by fire, or laid waste by the plague, may arrive, and scarcely one thrill of compassion vibrates through our hearts. Why is this so? Some may ascribe it to the perversity of our nature; but it admits of an interpretation far more honorable to the Creator. If we were affected by suffering in direct proportion to its amount, whether it were near us, where we might relieve it, or at a distance, where it would be beyond the reach of our kind offices, we should be abso-

lutely unfitted for the necessary business of life. We should be in a state of perpetual excitement, and pass our lives in the deepest affliction. Scarcely could we assemble for any social purposes, before some melancholy intelligence would arrive, and send us to our homes weeping and heart-broken. The wisdom of God has arranged things differently. The misery which is near us, and which it is within our ability to relieve, we are made to feel intensely. But it would have been diffusing suffering to a needless extent, if we had been made to be deeply affected by those calamities, which, in proportion as they are removed from us, it is out of our power to alleviate. It is true, that as our benevolent affections are cultivated, they range through a wider and ever enlarging circle. But then they never can be cultivated, their growth is never healthy, unless they are first and principally fostered at home, and towards those whom Providence has thrown within the reach of our influence. Our sympathies may be powerfully swayed by the imagination, and driven across seas and deserts; but as a general truth, they are powerfully affected by what is near, and but feebly touched by what is remote. This being our constitution, the inference admirably accords with the spirit of the gospel, which teaches us that we do our duty best when we are uniformly faithful to our natural and common relations.

7. The genius of liberal Christianity advances another claim upon our regard, when we observe how perfectly it consults human comfort in the cognizance which it takes of the daily feelings and habits — of those dispositions of mind, which do not attract public observation. 'It is not,' it has been observed by another, 'with gross acts of

vice, or with splendid virtue, that our religion is mainly conversant. This is not its true spirit. It descends even to that turn of sentiment which fashions the deportment of man to man.' It would preside in the daily interchanges of domestic life, and incite to a thousand little 'endearing cares and engaging attentions.' It would teach us to be considerate, and to cheer all around us with 'glad words and kind looks.' In so doing it takes a humble sphere, but it accumulates an untold amount of happiness. Great deeds of benevolence, great acts of generosity, no doubt produce a great deal of joy, and make many hearts light, but 'a humane consideration, a rational and habitual indulgence for others, evinced by an uninterrupted sweetness of manner,' does more, infinitely more, for the substantial and abiding comfort of human life. The causes of great happiness or misery are only occasional. It is the little occurrences of every day, which, considered in themselves, may appear insignificant, that go to make up the amount of human enjoyment or misery. It is very seldom that you have an opportunity of saving the life of a fellow-creature; but every day you may make some little contribution to the happiness of those with whom you associate, either by a kind word, or an encouraging smile. You are not often called upon to submit to a great injury, or to forgive a determined enemy; but almost every hour of every day, some little forbearance is to be practised, some little petulance of temper to be pardoned. Christianity, therefore, in taking into her jurisdiction the usual course of human feeling and conduct, is full of benevolent wisdom, and shows herself acquainted with the wants of man. What an enormous waste may be made of the great sum of happi-

ness, by the indulgence of a fretful, uncomplying temper at *home!* It may ruin the peace of a whole family, and drive the husband and father to the forgetfulness of excess. It is no common excellence in Christianity, that its object is the diffusion of a peaceable, quiet, proper spirit through the ordinary relations of society.

8. That religion is commonly thought to prefer the best claim to our faith, whose requisitions betray no weak indulgence, but are rigid and unbending — difficult to be complied with. Upon this principle, Christianity, in the fidelity of its moral bearings, manifests a decided superiority. Great acts of virtue, of self-denial, or of penance, are deemed the most praiseworthy, and the religion that requires them is considered the most excellent, because such acts are supposed to be the most difficult. But the excellence of the gospel is as discernible in the lowly sphere in which she aims to operate, as in the higher walks of virtue. The intelligent observer will perceive, that there is really more moral energy, and of course, more true greatness displayed, in the ordinary virtues, in the quiet and unostentatious exercise, for instance, of common kindness, than in any of those sacrifices or in any of those great deeds, which are so dazzling, and which we are very much assisted to perform by the prospect of an immediate reward in the applause they will command. It is, indeed, comparatively easy, to make those great sacrifices which are only occasional. Many a man will hazard his life for another, — perform an extraordinary act of beneficence — watch with incessant care and admirable patience over the sick bed of one whom he loves; but where, where under heaven, shall we find the individual, who preserves a cheerful tone of feel-

ing, a gentle manner, undisturbed amidst all the little causes of vexation that arise even in the intercourse of the most devoted of friends? Where is the abode around which the magic of domestic affection has been strong enough to keep off every evil shape of suspicion and unkindness? I know that hitherto the world has attached no religious worth to these humble and daily exercises of the social affections of which I speak; but I believe that they form the last accomplishment of the truly religious man. They are the last and brightest of those ornaments in which he becomes completely adorned in this world, and which remind us that he is prepared for another. When you see a man invariably kind in his temper, acting with perfect propriety in all the *minutiæ* of life, with a heart so gentle as to accommodate itself at once and exactly to the happiness of those around him, you have the surest evidence that he has imbibed the divine spirit of Christianity. The tree is loaded and is bending with fruit. If a celestial light were illuminating his person, you would not have better proof that he is a child of God, a friend of Jesus, and an heir of heaven.

9. There is a striking and beautiful correspondence between this trait of our religion, upon which I have now dwelt, and the external creation. The same mode of divine wisdom is discernible, in the natural, and in the spiritual world. We find the universe around us constructed upon the largest scale, to effect the grandest purposes, and at the same time a delicate care is bestowed upon its minutest parts and its humblest operations. The shower which fertilizes hill and valley, sends its invisible influence into every branch and bud, through the fibres of the smallest plant. The law which guides the

planets in their paths, reaches to every atom. The light which bathes the hemisphere in glory, is fitted to the organs of the meanest insect. So is it found to be in the moral world, as that has been displayed to us in the true light of Christianity. The sublimest objects are revealed to us. The doors of the spiritual universe have been flung open before us. A firmament of moral glory is unrolled over our heads, at the sight of which, an irrepressible longing after unknown good, a *moral passion* is awakened within us. At the same time, tender heed is given to our natural affections, and a careful provision is made for their ordinary exercise. They are not swallowed up, lost and forgotten, in the glory that has been revealed, but they are called out, and actively and continually employed.

10. We began with observing, that when the Apostles first preached the religion of their Master, a great sensation was produced. This remark may need to be guarded. It may possibly be inferred from it, notwithstanding the general tenor of these pages, that Christianity is of an *exciting* nature. Whereas its spirit is peace. It is true that great public disturbances attended its introduction. But this was owing to the state of the human mind — to the ignorance and prejudices of men. Our Saviour foresaw the consequences of the collision between his peaceful doctrines and the interests and passions of the world, and he said, 'Think you that I have come to bring peace on earth, nay, but a sword.' Every one perceives that he adopted this striking mode of expression, not because peace was not his great message, but to show in an impressive manner how sure and inevitable were the commotions by which the first steps of

Christianity would be accompanied. So certain was it that discord and confusion would ensue, that our Lord spoke of these things as if they were the objects of his mission. Still, unavoidable as some degree of violence was under the circumstances of the times, it was accidental and temporary. And no one can doubt that the main design of our religion is to produce tranquillity and public order, and that sobriety, quietness and regularity are the natural fruits of Christianity. The legacy of its blessed Founder was *peace*. It sought to operate on the human mind, not by extravagance and excitement, but in a gentle and gradual manner. Its coming in the soul is not with a sudden blaze and with imposing circumstances, but it is like the silent and slow operations of the material creation. And here we may observe a still more striking analogy than that last mentioned, between our religion and the works of nature.

It is the object of all religions but the religion of the New Testament — it is the aim of many religious teachers at this day, — to startle men, to produce excitement and turbulence in the mind. Now the design of the Creator, so far as it is manifest in the course of nature and providence, appears to be very different. He does not aim to excite us, but to keep us calm and composed. Only think how tremendous are the resources of his omnipotence, and then look around you and see how quietly he uses them. There are no dazzling and confounding displays of power, such as we may easily conceive him to make if he chose. On the contrary, every thing is done in the softest and stillest manner. It seems as if God, remembering that we are dust, and knowing how excitable a creature man is, took particular care not

to disturb and overthrow our minds. In an instant he might make such an exhibition of his power as would drive man to insanity, and blast his intellect by an overwhelming sense of terror. The Almighty, so far from using any such means of impressing us, walks around us with noiseless step, and carries on the magnificent operations of nature slowly and silently, and seems to veil himself from us in mercy. The wheels of God's creation 'creak not harsh thunder' as they turn, but roll on with a gentleness equaled only by the power that moves them. Christianity in our view accords most beautifully with the spirit of nature and providence. The ends at which it aims are sublime, how simple and gentle are the means! It would fashion man, this poor fabric of dust, to the glorious image of the Invisible God. But it erects no imposing apparatus to effect this object. It bids us cultivate faithfully our natural affections and discharge our plain duties quietly and without ostentation; and in this way, the wonderful process of spiritual creation is carried on and the human soul becomes a partaker of the divine nature.

I have thus endeavored, in various ways, to exhibit what I conceive to be the practical aim — the spirit of the New Testament, because there is ever such a strong disposition in the human mind, especially under deep religious impressions, to start away from the natural sphere of human duty, and to have its sense of moral obligation disturbed by false, imaginary, and profitless requisitions.

It is not intended to be denied, that occasions arise when we may go out of the usual routine of duty, with advantage. While Christianity bids us do good, espe-

cially to them who are of the household of faith, it bids us also to do good to all, as we have opportunity. Occasions offer when the hand of charity may be extended to a distant sufferer. Of these we should avail ourselves. But we earnestly protest, — and we believe that we do it in accordance with the genuine spirit of our religion — we earnestly protest against the sentiment so current, that these opportunities are the principal occasions upon which our benevolent affections are to be exercised — that they afford the chief room for our religious faith to show itself; as if the common course of life did not daily, hourly and momently, make demands upon our kindness, our patience, our integrity, in short, upon every quality that helps to constitute the christian character; as if the ordinary relations of the world did not furnish, for the display of every christian grace, a vastly better opportunity than can be afforded by occasional calls upon our sympathy made by great and distant objects.

If there were no other objection to this false sentiment, it would be enough, that it sets up a most injurious standard of character. He who is absorbed in striking schemes, is extolled to the skies on this account. What he is in common life, whether he is affable to those around him, merciful to the poor debtor, and honorable in all his transactions, are points which, if they are not wholly neglected, are deemed matters of inferior importance. On the other hand, he who withholds his countenance from the imposing movements made in behalf of some distant object, no matter how irreproachable his character in the common offices of the world, is regarded with coldness and distrust.

But we have a greater objection still to this prevalent mode of feeling. It is opposed to the whole spirit of the religion of Jesus. That spirit we have taken many words to illustrate; but if the world were only prepared to receive it, it might be described in a very few. *Charity and all the christian graces begin at home.* This maxim is, to be sure, in liberal use among those who are liberal in nothing else. Still it is true. And it is better that it should be sometimes perverted, than always forgotten. Yes, our virtues must take firm root at our firesides. They must tenderly overshadow our natural and familiar friends, and then extend themselves to all those with whom we have any dealings or intercourse. This is the proper growth of the inward man, when nurtured by the genius of Christianity. The costliest offering of religion is to be rendered in the sphere of one's personal influence. There the choicest sacrifices must be kindled, and watched day and night. If when thou comest to lay thy gift upon the altar of some public charity, thou remember that thy brother has aught against thee, leave there thy gift — but no, carry it back, and if it be possible, let it help to cancel what is due from thee to thy brother. It is idle for a man to profess to sympathise with the sorrows of his race, to engage with a proper feeling in plans of general benevolence,— he deceives himself,—if at the same time he is harsh, impatient, and unforgiving, toward that small portion of the human family, with which he comes into daily contact. And on the contrary, if he who is faithful to his common duties, whose kindness radiates through the whole circle of his personal influence, at the same time withhold his patronage from public schemes of benevolence, it is not for his brethren to cher-

ish toward him any feeling but the most cordial respect. We cannot estimate the good which he is doing. So long as he discharges so faithfully his duty to those around him, which is his first duty, there is no room for anything but approbation.

There is nothing so beautiful as the pure and uncorrupt religion of Jesus Christ. Would you look upon its beauty, fill yourself with its quiet, gentle, and glad spirit, and in the still chambers of your own soul, God will make unto you a great revelation. Truth, in her own divine and eternal form, shall appear there. 'He who doeth God's will shall know the doctrine.' The tongue of an angel could not give you such a sense of its worth and glory, as you shall have, when it has thoroughly sanctified you.

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EVANGELICAL UNITARIANISM.

It is an objection, urged with great frequency and assurance, against liberal and rational views of christian truth, that they are not adapted to 'the common people.' Unitarian Christianity, it is said, may, perhaps, be a very suitable and convenient religion for the select and favored few, who move in the higher walks of life, the intelligent, the opulent and the refined; but it will not do for the mass of the people, in the middle and humbler ranks of society, especially the rude, the ignorant and the poor.

This charge, it is readily admitted, is a very serious one, and if substantiated, must go far to shake our confidence in those principles, which we now firmly believe to be the very 'truth as it is in Jesus.' Every one allows, that Christianity was designed to be a universal religion; the religion of all mankind, in every country, and in every age. Of course it must be suited to the mass of the people, particularly the illiterate and poor, who constitute a large portion of every community. From the facts, too, related concerning its publication and reception, it is certain that *primitive* Christianity was intended and was fitted for the mass of mankind. Our Saviour himself mentions it as a decisive evidence of his divine mission, and a peculiar feature of his ministry, that the '*poor* had the gospel

preached to them.' The Evangelist also informs us, that 'the *common people* heard him gladly.' Now if Unitarian Christianity be the genuine faith; if it be identical with the primitive gospel, it must possess the same characteristics; it will produce the same effects. It will be level to the capacities, and will meet and satisfy the wants of the humble and unlettered. If it be incapable of this; if it be suited only to men of deep thought and cultivated intellect, then, surely, it wants one of the prominent features of the genuine, primitive gospel; and the presumption is strong that it is not 'the faith once delivered to the saints.'

It will not, then, be deemed surprising, either by the friends or the opponents of Unitarian Christianity, that we are anxious to relieve it from this popular and specious objection. Believing the views that we hold to be the truth of God, and of vital importance to the spiritual welfare of mankind, we feel it to be a solemn and imperative duty to prove that they stand on the vantage-ground of Scripture. For the same reason, we are solicitous to vindicate them from the vague and unfounded charges that are floating about in the community. These charges are calculated, if they are not designed, to render our principles suspected and odious, to create distrust and alarm in the minds of some who hold them, and to deter the inquisitive from examining them. The objection in question, we are persuaded, is utterly groundless, and as we hope to show, is very unjustly alleged against our views of christian doctrine. In investigating the subject, I shall first mention two circumstances which may have given rise to this charge, and invested it with some appearance of plausibility. I shall then endeavor to show that Uni-

tarian Christianity is, by its very nature, suited to interest, satisfy and bless the common people. And in conclusion, I shall attempt to maintain the position by an appeal to facts and experience.

I. 1. A circumstance, which, perhaps, more than any other, has given rise and currency to this charge, is to be found in the manner in which Unitarian Christianity appeared and gained ground in this part of the country. Here, unquestionably, it was first embraced and maintained by the intelligent, reflecting, educated part of the people. It was natural that they should be the first to recognise and adopt the truth. Reformation in theology, as in everything else, usually originates with the thoughtful and well-informed, and by their influence and example is diffused through the community. Who were the authors and promoters of the Protestant Reformation, that glorious improvement, that important step towards the restoration of pure Christianity? Certainly not the ignorant and superstitious populace of the sixteenth century. Luther, Zuingle, Melancthon, and their coadjutors, were men of extraordinary talents and profound erudition, thoroughly acquainted with all the subtilties of the scholastic theology. Without such qualifications they would have been incompetent to detect the gross errors that had become incorporated and ingrained into the popular faith, or to defend their positions against the wily disputants of the times.

The same was the case with those excellent men among us in New-England, who carried on the Reformation still farther, and led the way to the religious opinions which we now hold. From the first planting of our land, we

were blessed with a race of learned and educated men, both in church and state. Our magistrates and our ministers, from the beginning, were accomplished scholars, and profound thinkers, coming fresh from the schools and universities of the old world, deeply versed in all the learning and theology of the day. Their descendants did not disgrace themselves by degenerating from their sires, but proceeded onwards in the career of inquiry and improvement, till, at the end of little more than a century, the result was, that the most intelligent and sensible men, both among the clergy and laity, in this part of the country, abjured the dogmas of the Genevan Reformer, and embraced the milder and more rational tenets of the Arminian faith. The reformation, so happily begun and forwarded, did not stop till the great doctrine of the undivided, uncompounded unity of God, was discerned and embraced in the metropolis of New-England and its vicinity, by almost all the men of standing and influence, who had sufficient intelligence to discriminate between truth and error, and to disentangle the plain declarations of Scripture from the maze of bewildering fictions in which they had so long been involved. This ascendency which Liberal Christianity acquired, at its first development, among persons of judgment and reflection, it has ever since retained, and still possesses.

Wherever, indeed, the light of christian truth has broken in upon the darkness of prevailing error, the intelligent have usually been the first to welcome it. It was perfectly natural, therefore, that Unitarianism should, in the first instance, appear and spread, not among the ignorant and poor, but among the well-informed, occupying important stations in society. This simple circumstance,

I conceive, has given some countenance to the charge now under examination, that Unitarianism is not a religion for common minds. The primitive doctrine was revived and restored by the zealous labors of the enlightened and educated; and from this very natural circumstance a most illogical inference has been drawn, that it is *suited* only to them. It might just as reasonably be argued that the common implements and machines employed in the various departments of manual and mechanical labor, are suited only to the ingenious and skilful, merely because they were the first to discover and apply them. It might just as well be asserted, for instance, that the safety-lamp could not possibly be handled by the ignorant miner, but was adapted solely to the use of experienced chemists, simply because we owe its invention to an individual of that description. I am surprised that any person of tolerable sense is deluded by such sophistry. No one objects to the christian revelation, that it had an all-wise God for its author, and for its promulgator one on whom the spirit of wisdom and understanding was poured without measure. Why then should any one object to Unitarianism that it was here first avowed and is still defended by men of high talents, sound sense and sober judgment? We rejoice, that it had such promulgators, and that it now possesses such advocates. We rejoice, too, in the belief that it is now daily extending itself among the less informed, but no less important and worthy classes of the community.

2. There is another circumstance which perhaps has done something to countenance and foster the charge now under consideration; — I refer to the abstruse and subtile speculations on Materialism, and Philosophical Neces-

sity, which were so zealously maintained by some of the prominent English Unitarians towards the close of the last century. The avowal and defence of these metaphysical heresies not only subjected them to unmerited odium, but likewise brought an additional reproach on the obnoxious religious opinions of which they were at the same time the intrepid heralds and champions. It is not surprising, that the undiscriminating should consider these philosophical notions as naturally and necessarily connected with Unitarian Christianity, particularly as its distinguished advocates seemed disposed to blend them into one system and to link together their fortunes and their fate. It is less surprising that the politic and practised opponents of Unitarianism should avail themselves of such an apparent concession, to strengthen the existing prejudice against that faith. On the ground of this pretended identity they reared the objection we are examining. 'A system,' said they, 'so abstruse and metaphysical, dealing in such nice distinctions, and involved in such minute discussions, cannot possibly be level to general comprehension; it may, perhaps, be a congenial religion for metaphysicians and philosophers, but it never will suit simple and plain men among the common people.'

It was unfortunate for English Unitarianism that it was thus linked by some of its ablest supporters with obnoxious topics totally irrelevant to it; topics which, whether true or false, had nothing to do with its characteristic principles. That they are irrelevant and independent, is proved by the simple fact, that the very points in question have been strenuously maintained by eminent Orthodox divines, and as strenuously impugned by other distinguished Unitarians. They have at different times

been claimed and disclaimed by the combatants on both sides. The doctrine of Philosophical Necessity has no more natural and necessary connexion with the Unitarianism of Hartley, Priestley and Belsham, than with the Calvinism of Edwards, Toplady and Hopkins. On this point, as well as on the subject of Materialism, it is well known that Priestley found his most able and strenuous opponent in Dr Price, who at the very time of the controversy was his coadjutor in disproving the doctrine of the Trinity. The fact is, that these are questions belonging to entirely distinct and independent provinces, and ought not to be confounded. The one is a question of metaphysics, the other of theology. It is an unworthy artifice to charge upon a whole sect the supposed practical consequences of philosophical opinions maintained by individuals who belong to, or see fit to take the name of that sect. Whether the opprobrium, if opprobrium it be, of embracing the metaphysical speculations of Priestley, can or cannot justly be fixed upon the English Unitarians of his time or upon those at the present day, this much is certain, that it cannot rightfully be fastened on the Unitarians of this country. These speculations are adopted, I believe, by few if by any among us, and by them are not considered as making a part of their theological belief. As I have before observed, they have no natural or necessary connexion with Unitarian Christianity, and it is therefore manifestly unreasonable and unfair to infer from such a supposed connexion that our views of religion are too abstruse and refined for common minds.

II. Having thus accounted in part for the origin and currency of the charge under consideration, I come now

to speak directly of the adaptation of Unitarianism to the capacities and wants of the common people. I maintain, and shall endeavor to show, that from its very nature it is eminently adapted to interest, satisfy and bless them.

1. A prominent and striking feature of Unitarian Christianity, is its perfect *simplicity;* and it is this simplicity of doctrine which recommends it to the acceptance, and adapts it to the comprehension of the unlearned portions of the community. It is so perspicuous and intelligible, that 'he who runs may read,' and 'the wayfaring man need not err therein.' It is therefore exactly the kind of religion that the common people want; not a system of intricate, shadowy, evasive dogmas, but a plain exposition of truths which are palpable, distinct and within the comprehension of common understandings. Trinitarianism is avowedly *mysterious.* 'The Trinity,' says Dr South, 'is a mystery; and he that too much strives to understand it, may lose his wits. Why should I then unhinge my brains, and pursue distraction in the disquisition of that which a little study would sufficiently convince me to be unintelligible?' In another place he says, 'That any one should be both Father and Son to the same person, produce himself, be cause and effect too, and so the copy give being to the original, seems at first sight so very strange and unaccountable, that were it not to be adored as a *mystery*, it would be exploded as a *contradiction.*' What can be more complicated and perplexing to common understandings than the doctrine of the Trinity? This doctrine asserts that there are three persons in the godhead. Now the common people, unused to the nice distinctions of scholastic theology, understand by a person, an intelligent being. They are,

therefore, inevitably exposed, from the simplicity of their minds, to the imminent peril of either 'confounding the persons or dividing the substance;' and of thus running into Sabellianism or Tritheism. In striving, too, to understand and believe the doctrine of two natures in Jesus Christ, how difficult it is for them, on the other hand, not to divide the person or confound the natures, and thereby fall into the Nestorian or Eutychian heresy. However easy it may be to the practised and erudite theologian, to them it must be a perplexing and laborious task, to grasp and retain the true Orthodox faith on these shadowy and mysterious points. They must undergo much training and drilling before they become familiar with the technical terms which are requisite for the bare statement of the doctrine; and it will require much time and study to reconcile them to the subtile and intricate devices by which the plain declarations of Scripture are evaded. On this point the opinion of Dr Watts is explicit and valuable. The following extract is made from his 'Solemn Address to the Deity.'

'Thou hast called the poor and the ignorant to the knowledge of thyself and thy Son. But how can such weak creatures ever take in so strange, so difficult and so abstruse a doctrine as this, in the explication and defence whereof, multitudes of men, even men of learning and piety, have lost themselves in infinite subtilties of disputes and endless mazes of darkness? And can this strange and perplexing notion of three real persons going to make up one true God be so necessary and so important a part of that christian doctrine, which in the Old Testament and the New is represented as so plain and easy even to the meanest understandings?'

In the exercise of devotion the doctrine of the Trinity must involve common minds in inextricable perplexities and embarrassments. They must frequently be at a loss whether they are worshipping one person or three, and must sometimes be anxious lest they do not properly distribute their praises, or give unto one the glory that is due to another. That this is not mere supposition, will appear from the following testimony of Dr Noah Worcester, extracted from his 'Bible News.'

'From my infancy,' says he, 'I was taught to believe the Athanasian doctrine of three distinct, coëqual and coëternal persons in one God. And I do not recollect that I had any doubt of its correctness until several years after I began the work of the ministry. Believing it to be both true and important, according to my ability I taught it to others. But even while I taught it, I was often embarrassed by it both in prayer and preaching. In giving thanks to God for his astonishing love in giving his Son to die for our offences, the theory has occurred with a chilling and confounding influence. These thoughts would unavoidably rush into my mind — God and his Son are one and the same being; the Son could not in reality die or suffer any more than the Father; it was only a mere man that suffered, to whom the Son was mysteriously united. In my preaching, while expressing the love of God in sparing not his own Son, the same theory and the same train of thoughts would occur; and in some instances both in prayer and in preaching, the influence of these thoughts has been so great, as for a time to obstruct my utterance.'

Let us turn from this complex and bewildering system to the simple and plain faith of Evangelical Unitarianism;

a faith that holds for its fundamental doctrine the intelligible and animating truth that One Infinite and Eternal Being, of unbounded power, unerring wisdom, and perfect goodness, sways the undivided sceptre of the universe; — a faith that explicitly declares that this great and good Being sustains to us the relation and character of a Father, exercising towards us a father's tenderness, a father's compassion, and a father's forgiveness; — a faith that reveals pardon to the penitent, imparts hope to the despairing, administers consolation to the afflicted, and opens the gates of heaven to the dying believer; — a faith that gives us a Saviour, whose office we can comprehend, and whose character we can appreciate; a Saviour who commands the homage of our understandings and wins the affections of our hearts; a Saviour worthy of our highest confidence, gratitude and love.

Such are some of the prominent features of Unitarian Christianity — a faith adapted to the comprehension, and level to the capacities of common minds. Will it be said that such a religion is not suited to the poor; that the poor cannot understand it, and will not embrace it? No. The charge cannot be true. The very nature of the faith forbids it. It is simple, intelligible, interesting. Every one can fathom it. Every one who examines it with seriousness and candor, will love and cling to it.

2. Unitarian Christianity is not only intelligible, but *reasonable;* and its reasonableness is another circumstance that recommends it to the acceptance of common minds. There is a native good sense in the mass of the people, that intuitively discerns whatever is self-contradictory, and instinctively rejects whatever is irrational. They have not the accommodating faith of the ancient Father, who

declared, 'I believe because it is impossible.' They are rather desirous with the Apostle, to be able 'to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them.' Such being the fact, they never would be disposed were it not for the influence of education, habit and prejudice, to hold fast a system of doctrines, which has been admitted even by its advocates to be irrational. Bishop Hurd, in speaking of the Orthodox scheme of the Atonement, says, 'In this awfully stupendous manner, at which reason stands aghast and faith herself is half confounded, was the grace of God to man at length manifested.' Another zealous supporter of the doctrine, the reverend Thomas Bradbury, affirms in his Sermons, 'The satisfaction of Christ is an unaccountable, irrational doctrine, destroys every natural idea we have of divine justice, and, lay aside the evidence of Scripture, it is so far from being true, it is ridiculous.'

While Trinitarianism has thus been admitted by some of its advocates to be intrinsically irrational, the reasonableness of Unitarian Christianity has not, I believe, been disputed. On that ground it is not impugned, except by representing it as originating in human reason, and resting solely upon it for support. Nothing, however, can be more unfounded than such assertions. When the Unitarian declares that his faith is reasonable, he does not mean to say that it is independent of revelation, or that its truths ever could have been discovered by the unaided powers of the human mind. No. He regards his religion as a divine gift; as a ray from the great source of light. Yet, while he bows with implicit deference to the truths of revelation, he respects, also, the teachings of his rational nature. He adopts the sentiment of the distin-

guished Methodist, Dr. Adam Clarke. 'The doctrine which cannot stand the test of rational investigation, cannot be true. We have gone too far when we have said, such and such doctrines should not be subjected to rational investigation, being doctrines of pure revelation. I know of no such doctrine in the Bible. The doctrines of this book are doctrines of eternal reason, and they are revealed because they are such.'

3. This leads me to speak of another characteristic of Unitarian Christianity, which eminently adapts it to the common people. It is throughout *scriptural*. It is its blessed peculiarity that its principles can be expressed in the very words of the Bible, unaltered and unmodified. Now the Bible is the poor man's library. He opens its leaves, and he needs no aids of learned criticism or logical acuteness to discern the great truths of Unitarian Christianity, standing out bold and prominent on every page. He finds there such passages as these: 'The Lord our God is One Lord. To us there is One God the Father. There is One God, and One Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.' Such statements appear to him explicit and satisfactory.

He turns to the Trinitarian system, and he finds that it is nowhere directly taught in the Bible, but that it is deduced by inference from a few difficult and obscure passages. From Genesis to Revelation he cannot discover a single definite and explicit statement of the doctrine of the Trinity or of the double nature of Christ. This fact is admitted by the advocates of the system. 'It must be owned,' observes Bishop Smallridge, 'that the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is proposed in our Articles, our Liturgy and our Creeds, is not in so many words

taught us in the sacred Scriptures. What we profess in our prayers, we nowhere read in Scripture, that the One God, the One Lord, is not one only person, but three persons in one substance. There is no such text as this, that the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.'

To obviate this deficiency of explicit, positive statements, recourse has been had to Creeds, Articles, Confessions and Catechisms, where the doctrines in question are set forth, by the aid of technical terms, with greater preciseness than they are in the Bible. And what kind of terms are these? We will mention as specimens, Tri-une God, God-man, God the Son, Trinity. No wonder some of the Reformers, who professed to take the Bible as their guide, disliked and condemned these artificial and unscriptural terms. 'The word Trinity,' says Luther, 'sounds oddly, and is a human invention It were better to call Almighty God, — God, — than Trinity.' And even Calvin declared, 'I like not this prayer, "O holy, blessed and glorious Trinity!" It savors of barbarity. The word Trinity is barbarous, insipid, profane; a human invention, grounded on no testimony of God's word; the Popish God, unknown to the prophets and apostles.'

There can be little doubt which of these two systems the common people would prefer, if left to themselves and freed from all extraneous influence. The reason why any of them who read their Bibles are Trinitarians, is that they read them with the biases and prejudices instilled into their minds in early life. The prevailing system of theology has preoccupied their thoughts. All their religious feelings are associated with its views. To re-

linquish them would seem like renouncing Christianity itself. The increase of light and the prevalence of a spirit of inquiry will one day work a cure of this evil; and then shall we see the mass of the people gladly receiving the current, unembarrassed doctrine of the Scriptures, the pure faith of Evangelical Unitarianism.

Such at least seems to have been the opinion of an eminent prelate of the Church of England. Dr Herbert Marsh, the present learned Bishop of Peterborough, suggested, some time ago, with his characteristic penetration and sagacity, that if the children of the mass of the people were educated on Mr Lancaster's system, and had the naked Bible put into their hands, on the plan of the Bible Societies, they would become Unitarians.

4. Another remarkable trait of Unitarian Christianity is its *practical* character. It is adapted to satisfy the wants of the common people, to shield them from their moral exposures, to soothe their sorrows, and to heal their woes. It is the poor especially who need its instructions, precepts and consolations. Encompassed with many temptations to sin induced by the very circumstances of their condition, they require all the encouragement and support which a plain and practical religion can furnish, to establish and retain them in the ways of holiness. Subjected to many privations and sufferings, alike inseparable from their station, they need something like the gospel of Jesus to cheer and console them. It was a blessed thing therefore, that he came 'to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to visit the forsaken, and to comfort all that mourn.'

I would not be understood to say that the poor alone stand in need of these exhortations, warnings and con-

solations; or that they are exclusively adapted to them. It is the eminent praise of pure Christianity that it is suited to the capacities and wants of mankind, by whatever circumstances their condition or their character may have been affected. It is a religion as much designed, and as much fitted, to check the growth of the errors and sins incident to wealth and eminence, as to eradicate the evil propensities and correct the bad habits of the lowly and destitute. It is a religion intended for all; it is a religion needed by all; by the high as well as by the low; by the rich as well as by the poor; by the enlightened as well as by the ignorant. For all men have the same common nature; the same capacity and want of religious guidance and instruction. They all have minds to be enlightened, hearts to be affected, hopes to be gratified, aspirations to be answered, souls to be saved.

But though all men stand in need of the guiding and soothing power of our pure and simple faith, yet the poor man more than others seems to require its friendly counsel and aid. The paternal and merciful character of God, revealed to us by Jesus Christ, must be most valued and revered by him who has no earthly friend or benefactor to whom he can turn in the time of his destitution and distress. Religion is the poor man's treasure, with which, he never can be discontented; without which, he can never be happy. It lights up a cheerful smile upon the face of bereaved poverty; smooths the pillow of sickness; and reveals to him, on his deathbed, the treasures which are laid up for him in heaven.

Unitarian Christianity, I have said, is eminently practical. Whilst it everywhere insists on the value and influence of correct opinions, it lays much more stress

and insists much more earnestly and frequently on the absolute necessity of having a heart right with God; of cherishing pure sentiments, devout feelings, holy desires. It has a great deal to say about a virtuous character and an upright life. It admits no substitute for these. It recommends strongly a right faith, but urges more strongly a right practice. Holiness, obedience to the will of God, conformity to all his commands, — these are the themes which it is constantly pressing home upon the hearts and consciences of men. Instead of telling mankind, as some other systems have done, that they can do nothing, it tells them that they can do much, that they can do everything. It assures them that their character depends upon their resolute and unwearied exertions; and that salvation, the happiness of heaven, is the natural result, the appointed reward, of a devout and holy character. It ascribes nothing to human merit, but all to divine mercy; and it recognises holiness as the condition, and the only condition, of divine acceptance.

Such a religion is the very religion which the poor need, to sustain and direct them; a religion which is throughout practical; which inculcates an elevated and severe morality; and which will relax it on no occasion, and on no condition. Unitarianism holds out no lure nor encouragement to sin. It teaches that 'the way of transgressors is hard;' that every one is accountable for his own deeds; and that there is no way for the sinner to return to God but by faith in Christ, sincere and unfeigned repentance, an amendment of character and life, and a resolute determination and endeavor to discharge all his duties to God and to mankind. Were this religion universally embraced by the ignorant and poor, what a happy change might we not witness in their

character and condition! Who will deny that Unitarian Christianity is singularly adapted, from its practical character, to improve and bless the common people? If it has not yet made its way among them, it is because it has not been preached to them at all, or has been preached to them injudiciously and feebly, or has been misrepresented and slandered in their hearing by its enemies. All these circumstances have operated to check the progress of Unitarian Christianity among the poor. Still it has made some progress, and is every day enlarging its influence and extending its triumphs. Let Unitarianism only be preached to the poor and unlearned with tenderness and zeal, and it will be embraced with joy. Experience has already proved it. The fields are now already white to the harvest; and we only want earnest, faithful, disinterested laborers to gather it into the garner of the Lord.

III. I proceed, in the third and last place, to appeal to the evidence of facts and experience in support of my position. Of these we have abundance. I shall adduce but a few instances, which show that Unitarian Christianity is suited to the capacities and wants of the common people, and when proclaimed unto them is readily and gladly embraced.

1. I remark, in the first place, that the great body of Christians, the unlearned, the common people, continued to hold the simple Unitarian faith which had been preached by Christ and his Apostles, till about the time of the council of Nice, in the beginning of the fourth century. They were shocked at the novel doctrine of the deity of Christ, which originated with the learned Gentile con-

verts, and strenuously opposed its introduction. The evidence of this fact is derived from contemporary writers who were themselves supporters of the Trinitarian doctrine. Our limits permit us to quote only a few of these authorities.

Nothing can be more decisive on this point than the following testimony of TERTULLIAN, who lived in the second century, and who here positively asserts, though with some peevishness, that the Unitarians were the greater part of Christians in his time. 'The simple, the ignorant, the unlearned, who are always *the greater part* of the body of Christians, since the rule of faith' (meaning, probably, the Apostles' Creed) 'transfers the worship of many Gods to the One True God, not understanding that the unity of God is to be maintained but with the economy, are shocked at this economy; imagining that this number and disposition of a Trinity is a division of the unity. They therefore will have it that we are worshippers of two and even three gods, but that they are the worshippers of one God only.' 'We,' say they, "hold the monarchy." [i. e. the unity.] Even the Latins have learned to bawl out for the monarchy and the Greeks themselves will not understand the economy.' It is impossible not to infer from this passage that in the time of Tertullian the great body of unlearned Christians were Unitarians.

ORIGEN, who lived in the third century, and was a firm believer and zealous defender of the deity of Christ, is equally clear in affirming the fact that the majority of the common people in his time were Unitarians. 'There are,' says he, 'who partake of the logos which was from

the beginning, the logos that was with God, and the logos that was God, as Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and any others that speak of him as the logos of God, and the logos that was with him. But there are others who know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified, the logos that was made flesh, thinking that they have everything of the logos, when they acknowledge Christ according to the flesh; such is the *multitude* of those who are called Christians.'

ATHANASIUS, who lived in the fourth century, and whose Orthodoxy, we suppose, will not be questioned, also acknowledges that the Unitarian doctrine was very prevalent among the lower class of people in his time. He calls them *the many*, and describes them as persons of low understandings. 'It grieves,' he says, 'those who stand up for the holy faith, that *the multitude*, and especially persons of low understandings, should be infected with those blasphemies.' That the Unitarians were exceedingly numerous in his time, or not long before it, especially in Africa, is evident from his complaints on the subject. He says that 'in Pentapolis of Upper Lybia, some of the bishops embraced the doctrine of Sabellius, and prevailed so much that the Son of God was hardly any more preached in the churches.'

From these passages we cannot help inferring that the simple views of Unitarian Christianity continued to be held by the common people till after the time of Athanasius, or after the council of Nice, that is, till the fourth century. And if this was the case then, we may safely conclude that the Unitarians were much more numerous at a more early period, as it is well known that from the growing influence of the philosophizing con-

verts, they kept losing and not gaining ground for several centuries.*

2. We now come down to modern times. Richard Wright devoted himself for more than thirty years to the labors of a Unitarian Missionary among the poor in England, Scotland and Wales. Educated a Calvinist, by a careful examination of the Scriptures he became a Unitarian, and then consecrated his life to the dissemination of the truth among the common people. 'In numerous instances,' says he, 'have I seen the objection to Unitarianism, that it is incapable of being the religion of the poor and unlearned, refuted by the best of all proofs, by its actually becoming the religion of many of them, in various parts of the kingdom, and producing in them that temper and conduct which all good men will acknowledge to be the genuine fruit of vital Christianity.' In another place he expresses his conviction, that of all religious systems, it is eminently calculated to be the religion of those numerous classes: containing a provision for their moral and spiritual wants, and requiring nothing but what they are capable of doing. 'The correctness of the opinion,' says he, 'which I formed in the outset, that Unitarianism is a religion suited to the poor and unlearned, has been abundantly verified in the course of my missionary life, and each succeeding year has added much to the evidence of its truth, until it is become a well established fact. Its success during the last twenty years has been chiefly among the *common people*.'

* For the above statements, we acknowledge our obligations to Priestley's History of Early Opinions and to the Review of the Controversy between Priestley and Horsley in the Cambridge General Repository.

3. Let me here introduce the concurrent and corroborative statements of Benjamin Goodier, a pious and devoted minister, now no more, who for a short time was a coadjutor of Richard Wright in his missionary labors. Early in life, he took a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of the common people, and felt an earnest desire to preach the gospel to the poor. 'We want preachers for the poor,' he said, 'and I flatter myself that I could be useful amongst them.' He accordingly devoted himself to this service, and labored assiduously to instil into their minds the simple and consoling truths, the pure and practical principles of Unitarian Christianity. From his printed journal and letters we extract the following minutes. 'In the afternoon I preached to a very good and attentive congregation, chiefly poor people. I had the pleasure of giving satisfaction to the whole of the meeting, but especially the poor. — I preached in the barn to a very crowded congregation; poor, serious and attentive.' Speaking of the introduction and establishment of Unitarianism at Rossendale in Lancashire, he says, 'Here is a congregation who have become Unitarians without reading any Unitarian book but the Bible, and even without knowing that their existed any persons of their own sentiments in the world. They are almost entirely composed of those who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. They have united themselves with a congregation in Rochdale, a neighboring town, who have become Unitarians under circumstances almost similar to their own. While facts of this nature exist, let it not be said that Unitarianism cannot become the religion of the poor.' In another place he says, 'Last week I spent three days in a visit to the Rochdale and Rossendale Unitarians. The simplicity, good sense, seriousness and piety of these people gratified me very much. The inhabitants of Ros-

sendale are simple and unlettered in general, but seem to possess considerable information on religious subjects. I slept at the minister's house one night. About nine o'clock, when the sun had set, and the people could not see to work, six or seven of them came to converse with him. Most of them were without hats and coats, and with their aprons and clogs on. They were all serious, and engaged in religious conversation with great readiness. Religion with them is an affair of the heart and life, not merely as with many, a speculative inquiry. I wish some of those had been with me that night who have doubted or affected to doubt whether Unitarianism could be brought to dwell in the humble cottages of industrious poverty.'*

4. Another striking evidence of the adaptation of Unitarian Christianity to the poor, may be seen in the case of William Roberts and his little band of Unitarian Christians, at Madras, in India. This remarkable man, a native of the Carnatic, and descended from heathen parents, in very obscure and indigent circumstances, after having been for several years a Trinitarian, was led by a careful study of the Scriptures, to embrace the doctrines of Unitarian Christianity. Though poor, illiterate, and in an humble station, he has by his own unaided efforts converted a number of his countrymen to the Unitarian faith, and they now form a society for christian worship. In his printed letters we find the following statement:

'Though my poverty and mean situation in life, and also my disqualification and inability to teach, be two great impediments, yet, as far as lay in my power, I always made a point of answering and instructing, and

* Interesting accounts of Wrights and Goodier, will be found in the Christain Examiner, Vol. II. pp. 329 and 437.

giving all the information I was master of, to all those of my countrymen who would. Among those who have been my hearers, about ten families, and some individuals, have embraced the Unitarian faith. Seven out of the ten families, are original converts from Heathenism. All of them are *poor;* their situation in life is much meaner than my own. There is not one European, or European descendant among us; not one rich man; not one learned man; not even one that can read English well. This disadvantage does not discourage me at all. I am convinced that the God of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures is the true and living God; and am also fully persuaded that Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, and the Jewish and first Christian churches, were Unitarians. To this truth I wish to bear my testimony among my countrymen as far as it lies in my power.' This case, like the preceding, completely refutes the objection we are examining, and establishes beyond question the adaptation of Unitarian Christianity to common minds.

5. I pass to another instance of the successful dissemination of our views among the common people. It may not be generally known that since the beginning of the present century, there has sprung up in this country a very numerous sect, who, abjuring all distinctive names, call themselves the *Christian* denomination. Originally they were seceders from the Presbyterian, the Baptist, and the Methodist denominations. Of course they were all nominally Trinitarians, having been educated in that doctrine. The doctrine, however, was soon canvassed, brought to the test of revelation, and universally rejected, with all its concomitant doctrines, as unscriptural. Within 25 years their growth has been wonderful, particularly in the Western States of the Union, and chiefly among the common people. They have now 500 ministers, and

from 700 to 1000 churches; and they number about 200,000 persons who have embraced their principles and doctrines. One of their principal preachers says, 'We are Evangelical Unitarians in preaching and applying the Unitarian doctrine; and it is this mode of preaching and applying it which has crowned our labors with such a rich harvest. It is this which has given us access to the *common people*, who constitute the greatest part of our churches and congregations.' Such is the success of Unitarian Christianity among the common people in our own land. Already it numbers 200,000 converts. Can any one, with these facts before him, presume to maintain that it is not a religion for the poor?

6. My last instance is the success which has attended the labors of the Unitarian Missionary among the poor in Boston. Into whatever families he has entered, he tells us, he has uniformly been received with great kindness and affection. His public religious services have for the last four years been regularly and fully attended, and appear to have excited great interest among those for whom they are designed. In a public meeting some time ago, he expressed with much feeling the high satisfaction he had derived from witnessing the adaptedness of Unitarian Christianity to the capacities and wants of the poor; and especially in the evidence he had had in the course of his labors how invaluable and sovereign a power it possessed to give consolation, peace and support in the mortal hour. Truly, 'the common people hear him gladly.' After such a successful experiment tried in the midst of us, will any one have the boldness to assert that Unitarianism is not a religion for the poor?

Such are the plain facts in the case; facts which cannot be denied nor invalidated. They tell us that during

the three first centuries, Unitarianism was the prevailing religion among the common people, and that at the present day it is embraced by the poor and unlearned in Great Britain, in India, in the western parts of our own country, and in the metropolis of New-England. These facts prove conclusively to my mind that the charge, so confidently alleged against it, of being unsuited to the poor and unlearned, is utterly destitute of truth. They make me value and love my religion the more; excite in me a desire to see it more widely diffused; and stimulate to new exertions in the cause of christian truth.

We see how this objection, when fairly met and thoroughly examined, vanishes away. It will be found so, I believe, with all the popular charges against Unitarian Christianity. — 'The sole object of our efforts,' to adopt the language of one of its eloquent defenders, 'is to remove the prejudices which obstruct inquiry, and obtain for it a full and candid examination. Let the evidences of Unitarianism be properly discussed, and its friends have no apprehensions as to the result. If a fair hearing be once obtained, the decision must be favorable. We have mighty advocates, whose voices are resistless. The mind of man pleads for us. Left to itself, it rises indignant at creeds which fetter the understanding and narrow the heart. The Word of God pleads for us. It bears our sentiments on every page; and rarely can it be perverted or tortured into the semblance of Trinitarianism. The heavens and the earth plead for us. Wherever they indicate design, it is benevolent design; and never has any one deduced from their appearances, a plurality of creators. The revelation of God, the reason of man, the constitution of nature, with united voice proclaim these eternal truths: — 'THERE IS ONE GOD! AND GOD IS LOVE!'

1st Series. No. 37.

PRACTICAL INFIDELITY BRIEFLY CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO THE PRESENT TIMES.

SECOND EDITION.

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At the annual meeting of the American Unitarian Association, May 25, 1859, Hon. Stephen C. Phillips, of Salem, offered the following resolution.

Resolved, That earnest and persevering efforts through the medium of the pulpit and the press, to disseminate rational, practical and liberal views of Christianity, are the most suitable means to arrest the progress of infidelity, and to confirm the influence of religion in honest and candid minds.

The substance of the remarks with which he supported this resolution having been by request of the Executive Committee reduced to writing, they were so impressed with the importance of the views presented, that they solicited Mr Phillips to permit their publication in a distinct form. They are here printed with considerable enlargement from the state in which they were offered to the meeting, and with the omission of some introductory matter

PRACTICAL INFIDELITY.

It may be shown that there exist evils and dangers in the midst of us, to which we are constantly exposed, and to which we are too apt to yield; which, although not specifically described and publicly condemned, threaten to exert a more baneful influence upon the character of the community, than what are considered to be the great and 'crying' sins and miseries that engross the laudable efforts of philanthropic individuals and societies, and are even deemed to require the interposition of the municipal authorities. I refer to evils and dangers which result from the increase of practical infidelity, from the prostration of moral principle, from the proneness to equivocation in ordinary dealings, from the breaches of good faith which public opinion no longer discountenances and even tolerates, from the unconcern and indifference with which social obligations of every sort, so long as they do not affect personal security, are evaded, nay openly violated, and, in instances as yet rare, unblushingly sneered at! I refer to evils and dangers which defy the penalties of law, and which, infusing poison into all the channels of social intercourse, will speedily corrupt the fountains of legislation! I refer to evils and dangers, which abhorring the restraints of virtue and religion, persuade or compel men to adopt

false and pernicious sentiments in regard to the former, and leave them no alternative but to renounce the latter! I refer to evils and dangers, which are the more alarming as they have commenced with the higher classes of society, and must be thence transmitted, by the force of example, through the whole mass of the population! I refer to evils and dangers, which are fraught with incurable mischiefs to the young, as their tendency is to pervert the impulses of nature, to wither the sensibility of conscience, to represent cunning as the highest proof of practical talent, and bold and daring, but concealed fraud, as the legitimate title of worldly distinction! Confining myself to this topic, the importance of which has not been exaggerated, I wish to speak of these evils and dangers with reference to their *origin*, their *progress*, and the most effectual *remedies*, which, in my judgment, are to be applied to them.

We are placed in a commercial community, whose history, strictly as such, is distinguished by striking incidents. From the necessities of their situation, foreign trade was the early resort of the first settlers upon the western shore of the Atlantic. They brought with them habits of industry; and a spirit of enterprise, identified with their character, was conspicuous in all their pursuits. Profiting by their example, their successors, at several distinct periods, were also enabled to take advantage of circumstances involved in the political relations of this country to the rest of the world, which furnished extraordinary facilities to commerce, and thus had the effect to scatter affluence with a lavish prodigality, if not with an impartial hand. Fortunately for them and for us, the temptations and trials of sudden prosperity

were brought upon a generation not before tainted by the corruptions of luxury; but, still more fortunately for them and for us, knowledge, and virtue and religious principle were the stability of their times. In their own scriptural language, the school and the church were their watch-tower of defence, and their ark of safety, and under the influence of popular sentiment, thus doubly guarded by divine and human power, the morals of the community escaped contamination, wealth was converted into an instrument of benefaction, avarice shunned the public view, and even fashion submitted to salutary restraint. It is our lot to live in a different age, under different circumstances, in the enjoyment of unprecedented advantages, but exposed also to extraordinary dangers. Our advantages consist in the greater diffusion of knowledge and of wealth. Our dangers result from the more general prevalence of vice and irreligion, to be attributed, perhaps, in part, to the admixture of a foreign population, but, mainly, to the gradual ascendency of loose habits, fashions, and principles, and (as I shall proceed to show,) to the revulsions of commercial enterprise, heedless of the vicissitudes through which it has passed. The world, long groaning under the burthens of war, presents the spectacle of universal peace. Other nations, devoting their energies to the arts of peace, have combined their exertions to destroy the commercial monopoly, which the accidental situation of this country for a time enabled it to possess. By the extinction of this monopoly, the scene of our commercial operations is changed; and instead of easy and certain gains, that were supposed to justify a spirit of bold adventure, we must now be

content with moderate and hard-earned profits, intermixed with frequent losses, and so distributed, as to induce every prudent and honest man to conform his enterprise to his means, and for the sake of gain to risk nothing beyond what he can safely lose. Of course, with such a change of circumstances, there should be a corresponding change of habits; extravagance of every sort should be suppressed; even our wants should be curtailed; and a vigilant economy should control our disbursements, and husband our resources. But the truth is, great as has been the necessity for a change, we have continued to transact business upon the same scale, claiming credit for reckless enterprise, and pretending to regard industry, even when misapplied, as meritorious; and we adhere to the same style of living, mistaking luxuries for necessaries, and imagining that to be due to our own dignity, which is producing hardship, injustice, and cruelty to others. Step by step, our career has been backward and downward; and the worst of the evil is, that so irresistible has proved to be the force of temptation, so unrelenting the grasp of avarice, and so absorbing the passion for rank and station, that with the loss of property has too often been associated the loss of character. Misrepresentation, duplicity, concealment — frauds in every shape which circumstances might suggest or ingenuity devise — have been in many glaring instances the concomitants and precursors of bankruptcy.

Bankruptcy is not criminal where it can be traced to a succession of calamities, baffling ordinary foresight and skill. The conflagration, the tempest, and the flood, resist human control; and an honest man may

become the prey of rogues, who abuse his confidence and plot his ruin. But bankruptcy, in some of the forms in which it is exhibited at the present day, involves a dereliction of principle, which, if it shall only continue to be tolerated, will subvert the foundation, upon which alone religion and virtue can be practically sustained. A merchant owes it, not only to himself, but to all with whom he is connected, to possess at all times an accurate knowledge of the situation of his affairs; and he has no moral right to contract debts beyond his known ability to provide for their payment. Such an act, however disguised, is a gross deception; nay, any attempt to disguise, or even to palliate it, aggravates its enormity. He has no moral right so far to tamper with the confidence of others, as to hazard their property and his character upon what is no better than the throw of a die — the result of a commercial speculation; and when a man deliberately undertakes to retrieve his misfortunes by incurring such hazards, he is not only sure to be foiled in his particular object, but by so doing he has violated his sense of duty — he is self-accused. There is no sin that he could commit, which at the moment he is more anxious to conceal from the scrutiny of the world; and although he may acquire the hardihood to cloak his motive, and may urge strong claims to the lenity of his creditors and to public sympathy, he has parted with that possession, for which lenity and sympathy, and even restored and augmented wealth can never compensate, *the consciousness of unwavering integrity.* He has ventured to practise an imposition upon himself, and this will precede any attempt to impose upon others. He has stained his soul, although by a secret

sin; and the stain of guilt is not easily obliterated. He has prostituted his mind by an unhallowed perversion of its highest faculty; and such an injury to the mind but too often proves, in the providence of God, a sting of torture to goad men to greater evil and to final ruin. For him, to say the least, religion and virtue no longer possess their original attractions; he has made a compromise with his principles, which they scorn to sanction. He no longer dares to claim their protection; he has deserted them in the conflict with expediency; and, having once escaped from their control, he finds it becoming constantly more inconvenient to submit to their restraints. So far as public opinion, or an unwillingness to appear grossly inconsistent requires it, he professes to regard them; but having ceased to be a Christian in practice, he finds himself gradually tending to speculative infidelity, and is thus prepared to embrace any system, in which utility and expediency have assumed the mould of his own character, and may be easily accommodated to his course of life.

The fate of the bankrupt, whose course has been thus irregular and precipitous, is but the ordinary fate of the desperate and abandoned gambler. Yielding to a common temptation, both are lured by similar expedients through successive gradations of guilt to the same end. The principal difference between the cases is, that while the dishonest gambler is seldom screened from the infamy which he deserves, the unprincipled bankrupt is often permitted to escape from censure, and is even aided in his disingenuous attempts to plead necessity in extenuation of voluntary default, and to refer to the counsel, or influence, or example of others what

is strictly attributable to his own weakness or want of principle. If things were always called by their right names, if social justice were inexorable, if the keen glance of public indignation were never averted from notorious and flagitious misconduct, how much of what passes for misfortune would be exposed as crime; how many impostures which are now palliated or concealed would be detected and punished, and how much more definite would be the tenure of personal reputation and the standard of common morality.

Another view of active life as now exhibited, deserves consideration. Bankruptcy may be avoided, and, in many cases, shrewdness, prudence and economy being brought in aid of a course of unfair dealing, the acquisition of wealth may be unimpeded. Success, however, when the law is violated, does not palliate crime; and wealth, although it formerly appeased venal priests, cannot purchase immunity from self-reproach. When christian morality has been tampered with, it becomes odious by exciting self-reproach; and he, who has supposed it for his interest habitually to break its rules, is glad to find a shelter, where, by renouncing its obligations and misled into a disbelief of its sanctions, he may cling to what he considers the only chance of escaping from its penalties.

Again, it is the manifest tendency of commercial pursuits, even when probity is held sacred, to produce a *worldly temper*, which if permitted to become excessive, is fatal to the growth of vigorous thought, and to the cultivation of refined feeling. It is in that numerous class who have made no attempt to resist this tendency, that so many instances occur of indifference to religion

of a character neither so venal nor so culpable as is elsewhere exhibited. They cannot plead the necessity of ignorance, nor the unsatisfactory result of a misguided but honest inquiry; nor on the other hand, is there any ground for attributing their disregard of religion to the motives, which, as has been shown, so closely connect it with depravity and dishonor. Religion they suppose to consist in abstraction, in spirituality, in rituals, and therefore, say they, it is not our business; it is but an interference with our regular avocations, and we have enough to do to take care of what we consider our proper concerns: religion may be useful to the clergy, and to any who choose to separate themselves from secular employments, but for a man of business to intermeddle with religion, is what ought not to be expected. Believing, perhaps, that it does some good to others, they may occasionally aid it with their money; for the benefit of their example, or for the sake of their families, they may be willing to spend a part of Sunday at church; but to go beyond these easy and trifling compliances, will, as they suppose, be too great a sacrifice of their interests. They flatter themselves, that, so long as they are punctual in their transactions, they have nothing to fear from God or man; and not aware that they are chasing a phantom, they rely upon their present pursuits as a permanent resource of occupation and enjoyment. Here, then, is the evil of worldliness; it is the frigid zone of the character, where there is neither moral verdure nor fragrance, neither fruit nor flowers, and where all must remain a dark and dreary waste, until a ray from heaven shall enlighten the mind, and the fire of religion enkindle the heart

How great then is the danger, that long cherished indifference to religion may relapse into settled aversion!

Such is an imperfect outline of the present condition of this particular community. A succession of commercial embarrassments involving individuals and families in absolute want, is shown to be fraught with moral evils of such wide-spread influence as to present a gloomy contrast with the past, and exhibit a fearful prospect of the future. In this state of things, that worst of evils, PRACTICAL INFIDELITY, which is but another name for LICENTIOUSNESS, is discovered to have made an unexpected progress, and, by the aid of circumstances that have been described, to have obtained an indulgence, which, at any previous period, would have been indignantly refused. Reposing upon the shield of misfortune, this deceitful nurse of diseased virtue, this Circean enchantress of an uneasy conscience, invades with her polluting footsteps the public resorts and domestic retreats, and tramples upon whatever is sacred and venerable in social and civil institutions.

I may not have been sufficiently discriminating, but such in my own view, has been the *origin* of this worst and most common species of infidelity; and not only here, but so far as history has detailed its triumphs, it will be found to have insinuated itself where individuals, — a king, or a people, — overleaping the restraints of virtuous habits and regular pursuits, maddened by ambition or avarice, and hurried by sudden impulses into commercial or political excesses, are driven onward in the career of ruin, till at last, when any effort must be too late, they desperately resolve to retrieve their

misfortunes by incurring greater risks, and eventually seal their fate by sacrificing whatever remains of virtuous principle and moral sensibility. In the case of such individuals, of such a prince, and of such a people, at the crisis which has been described, infidelity appears in a new dress, excites an unnatural sympathy, is tolerated, encouraged, and embraced. But in a well ordered community, where ambition and avarice are restrained by steady habits and fixed principles, where power never attempts oppression, where wealth cannot become a monopoly, where industry is compelled to toil for a subsistence, where virtue blesses competence and smiles upon contentment, where, to sum up the whole, the current of events is not disturbed by sudden changes and violent commotions, but flows on in quiet regularity — the fittest emblem of moral harmony; in such a community, infidelity, if not altogether excluded, must for a long time remain an unwelcome stranger. Impatient for its downfal, watching its decline, it

——————— 'on the tree of life
'Sits like a cormorant ——————————
——————————— 'devising death
'To them who live.'

The *progress* of infidelity is not strictly commensurate with its origin. Content to gain admission by a single entrance, it pauses not in its exterminating career, until religion and virtue are awed into silence, and sink into infamy. Never at a loss for ingenious pretexts, it disdains not to resort to common means of influence — affects to address the understanding — seeks to ensnare the feelings — appeals to prejudice and interest, to custom and habit, to whatever attracts or disgusts the indi-

vidual, and to everything which arouses public sympathy, or provokes universal contempt. It erects its own pulpit — establishes its own press — has its chosen, devoted, and professed advocates — usurps the privileges of rank, wields the arm of power, and claims the control of destiny. Thus absolute and pretending, it travels far and wide in quest of its victims, insatiable in its triumphs, unsparing in its cruelty, and relentless in its vengeance!

What, reduced to its simplest terms, is infidelity as we have now considered it? It is the rejection, as well of the religion of nature, as of the rational and confirmatory doctrines of Christianity. It is in most cases, the unqualified disbelief of all religious sanctions and moral obligations — of the existence of a God, and the reality of an hereafter — of the happiness of virtue, and the misery of vice. It deals with religious faith as an insult to the understanding, and with morals as a calculation of chances. It regards life as an independent possession, scorns and defies death, and even professes to welcome annihilation.

What can be more dangerous than such infidelity? Let it spread through the community, and it has already been seen what devastation it must carry in its track. It corrupts the innocence of youth; wrests from age the staff of its declining years; the ignorant are deluded by its speciousness, and the intelligent are duped by its sophistry. It undermines the bulwarks of society; and the measure of its mischiefs is only full, when it has converted the paradise into a desert, and rendered human existence a curse instead of a blessing.

How shall the progress of infidelity be stayed? The task is difficult, formidable, but, as we trust in heaven,

it may be accomplished. If God be for us, who shall be against us? If our religion is founded upon the rock of ages, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I answer then, summarily, that where infidelity is the associate of vice, you must convert the sinner from the error of his ways, and you will find that the disposition to lead a better life will be followed by the disposition to embrace a better faith. To show the folly, guilt, and misery of sin, and the reasonableness and bliss of virtue; to show the parental benevolence, the infinite wisdom, and the righteous retributions of the divine government, and in this connexion, the sinner's doom, the sinner's duty, and the sinner's hope, I know of no better, I know of no other means than Unitarian Christianity.

Where infidelity, or the profession of it, is not directly the result of vice in the individual, (although its introduction into the community may have been effected precisely in the manner which has been supposed) it is attributable to thoughtlessness, to prejudice, to ignorance, or to mistaken views of Christianity. For all cases of this sort, — and they are numerous as well as various, — the means already employed for the promotion of Unitarian views, propose a remedy. It is by renewed and unwearied exertions through the medium of the *pulpit* and the *press*, by exhibiting the religion of Jesus in its primitive simplicity, by showing its consonance to human reason, its benign influence upon human character, its adaptation to man's weakness and wants, to his highest powers and his tenderest feelings; it is by presenting in close connexion the theory and practice of the religion as illustrated in the precepts and character of Jesus —

it is by challenging an inquiry into its evidences, and by inviting a minute and thorough investigation of its claims — it is by showing unreservedly that this religion is not to be confounded with the traditions, and mysteries, and absurdities, with which ecclesiastics have sought to corrupt its text, and to pervert its meaning, but that, tested by its proper merits, it is a system of truth unmixed with error, — a code of morals, simple, comprehensive, and complete — conveying the clearest views of the existence, character, and government of God, and of the condition, duty, and destiny of man.

In my humble judgment, an intelligent and honest man may well be pardoned for doubting, ay, and for rejecting most of the religious creeds, which Papists and Protestants have sought to enforce with all the power of Church and State, as the true faith of Christians; for he will find it hard to persuade himself that any religion can be from God, which does violence to all natural sentiments of truth and virtue. In my judgment, too, an ingenuous heathen may be pardoned for mistaking the character of Christianity, who infers its spirit from the controversies of contending sects, and its morality from the notorious vices of private Christians, and the heinous profligacy of Christian nations. I think it, further, by no means astonishing that infidelity should have made, and should be making, the progress which I have attempted to describe, when, in addition to other causes, Christianity has been presented in so many garbled forms, with such repulsive features, so loaded with false terrors, glaring misconceptions, and manifest contradictions. Thus perverted and abused, it is no wonder that it should have signally failed to produce a

conviction of its authenticity, that it should have implanted, instead of eradicating error, and should have produced disgust, instead of inspiring respect.

May we not trust that it is reserved to Unitarians, profiting by the errors of their predecessors, to recover to Christianity the character and influence to which it is entitled? In this great cause, by the faithful use of our simple means, may it not be our good fortune to become eminently useful? By our preachers and our tracts, we may reach every man in the community who is disposed to inquire the reason of our faith and the object of our exertions. Let our views of religion, then, be widely diffused; and while we lament the tendency of other systems to perpetuate error, to nourish bigotry and to drive men to skepticism, let us congratulate ourselves that there is nothing in Unitarianism to impede the progress and diffusion of truth, but that its principles recognise the right of private judgment, and inculcate the duty of free inquiry, and that, especially, in its various conflicts with infidelity, it has never yielded a single argument, nor lost a single proselyte.

Let our preachers rightly estimate their responsibleness, and be faithful to their opportunities. Let them remember that there yet prevails a general disposition to listen to good preaching, and that the pulpit, when it combines the influence of learning and of piety, and promulgates liberal sentiments and rational doctrines, will never fail to convince, to persuade and to convert. As the custom now is, there are few who are not led in youth, in mature life, or in old age, in adversity, if not in prosperity, to seek the public instructions of religion; and I take it upon me to say, that there never has been an

instance, in which an honest and candid mind has failed to yield a ready attention to an exposition of the simple doctrines of the New Testament, and to derive gratification and improvement from devotional services, that raised the mind to the Source of truth, and filled the heart with emotions of gratitude, confidence, and love. To the clergy, at the risk of being thought presumptuous, I will venture to say further: — Respect the understanding and common sense of your hearers — let your instructions be adapted to disarm prejudice, and to excite reflection — avoid catch-words and cant phrases, which have become objects of vulgar disgust — make your sermons intelligible to the meanest capacity, and they will not, on this account, be less attractive to the highest — use plain language *on every subject* — seek not to alarm by sounding epithets, which borrow a charm from their vagueness, nor to terrify by appalling descriptions of the unknown future, offensive to the judgment, and addressed solely to the senses; but rely rather upon simple argument, practical exhortation, and serious expostulation. Realize yourselves, and impress upon your hearers, that Christianity, although a revelation from heaven, is addressed to men *as men*, that it can be believed only by the exercise of the reason, that its power lies in its simplicity, and that its moral influence is its brightest glory — that by warming the heart with the love of excellence, by elevating the mind to a perception of its divine powers, and by quickening the conscience, it aims to assimilate man to God, while by the same means it cannot fail to endear God to his human offspring.

Extensive and permanent as may be the influence of the *pulpit*, it is also proposed to effect the same object through the medium of the *press*. The diffusion of knowledge by means of concise and cheap publications, is an expedient happily suited to the character of the times, and to the circumstances of our people. At a distance, especially, many will read a tract who might never hear a sermon; and among ourselves the number is not small of those, who, deterred by various causes from attending a Unitarian church, will not refuse the opportunity of learning the character of Unitarianism, which a tract, seasonably thrown in their way, may from time to time afford. In the silent chamber, the religious tract is often welcomed as the messenger of truth and hope to the perplexed mind and anxious heart of the timid inquirer: and to the man of the world, upon many occasions of leisure and retirement, at home and in his travels, as often, perhaps, by accident as by design, it becomes the agreeable companion of an idle hour, supplies topics of useful reflection, administers wholesome advice, removes unfounded prejudice, corrects pernicious errors; and by this fortuitous circulation, by this invisible agency, often goes far to answer all the important ends of moral and religious instruction. In the conversion of infidels, religious tracts already afford the proofs of encouraging success. Tracts, too, have an advantage over sermons, inasmuch as they admit of a greater variety of style and subjects, and their attractiveness may be increased by suiting them at pleasure to the tastes, habits, and feelings of different classes.

I have thus ventured to solicit attention to existing evils of a practical character, which I have supposed to be deserving of serious consideration. In enforcing the duty of Unitarian Christians in reference to these evils, I have urged only a resort to those *public means of influence*, which are within the reach of our larger associations.

In pursuing the subject, I should feel bound to enlarge upon the *imperative obligation of combining private efforts with public exertions* at so critical a period as the present, and in aid of a cause which is as closely connected with individual interests as with the common welfare. With all the efforts to explain and publish it, Unitarianism is as yet strangely misunderstood. Its enemies, whether Orthodox Christians or avowed infidels, are indefatigable in their various efforts to misrepresent it; and its friends, I must be permitted to think, have never yet done it justice. I complain particularly of laymen, who are not in general sufficiently prepared to vindicate the religion which they have embraced from the aspersions, with which ignorance and malevolence delight to assail it in the common intercourse of society — upon the very occasions where a simple and rational statement of its objects and doctrines might prevent much misapprehension, stifle many a sarcasm, and solve doubts which are but too prevalent in honest minds. I complain still more of Unitarian laymen, that there is such a sad deficiency of practical adherence to the moral precepts, to which we attach so much importance in estimating the peculiar value of our principles, and the influence of which might well be expected to be conspicuously displayed in our characters and lives. It is true that

many Unitarians make but little use of their religion except in the formation of their opinions; and there are those, I fear, who value it for this purpose only so far as it enables them to divest their minds of the influence of the uncomfortable doctrines of Orthodoxy, and who disregard the obligations which are implied in the very act of substituting the precepts of plain duty for the subtleties of a blind faith. Let Unitarianism, in its ordinary acceptation, be stripped of all connexion with the tradition, the cant, and the ecclesiastical frauds, so abhorrent to the reason of any honest man, that have but too often had the effect to render religion ridiculous and contemptible — let its simple and solemn truths be familiarly urged in the simple and solemn manner that alone can do justice to their character — let it be shown that here is no imposture, no priestcraft, no idolatry, but only stubborn facts, and glorious truths, and immortal hopes, and blessed promises — let it be shown, still further, *by living examples*, that Unitarianism is efficacious to produce the strictest virtue, a temperate but constant cheerfulness, a devotion to duty which disregards temporary expedients, which is faithful to all the offices of private and social life, which conciliates universal respect; — I say, let Unitarianism be thus understood and practised, and honest and candid minds will not fail to honor and embrace it. It will appear that its objects are the highest to which the human intellect can aspire, that its means are adapted to the circumstances of the human condition — that to disbelieve its truths, is to disregard the first dictates of the understanding, and to violate its precepts is to revolt against the best feelings of the heart.

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THOUGHTS

ON

VITAL RELIGION.

SECOND EDITION.

PRINTED FOR THE

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THE whole of this Tract is not now for the first time published. Several passages, by the same author, are here reprinted with revisions, from an article in answer to the inquiry, 'What is Vital Religion?' which appeared a few years since in the 'Christian Disciple.'

PRINTED BY I. R. BUTTS....BOSTON.

CHARACTERISTICS

OF

VITAL RELIGION.

We frequently hear the terms vital piety, vital Christianity, *heart-religion;* which, with similar expressions, are employed in the writings and conversation of Christians to denote the character of true religion. They are terms of comprehensive import; but they are sometimes misunderstood and not seldom perverted. We propose here a few remarks explanatory of these terms. We shall exhibit some of the characteristics of vital religion, particularly as it is to be distinguished from that, which is merely speculative; and shall show what we mean, or ought to mean, when we pray that it may be established in our hearts, or in the hearts of others. In doing this, we shall remark on the sentiments or affections, which it calls into exercise; and on the manner, in which we may expect to find them exhibited.

I. Vital religion, that, which exerts a practical, sanctifying influence on the character, has unquestionably much to do with the heart and the affections. It imparts its own spirit, and gives its law to these. But that they

may be properly exercised, it lays its foundation, first of all, in clear and just conceptions of the truth of religion. It supposes the mind to be enlightened, that it may distinguish the objects, evidence, and province of truth. In this, however, is not implied freedom from all error. There may be what the apostle denominates the 'spirit of faith,' a strong and habitual conviction of truth, mingled with much speculative error. At the same time, true faith lays its foundation in knowledge; and if we would experience the [illegible] influences of vital Christianity, our minds must be [illegible]ghtened — 'we must know the mind of Christ,' — we must understand the doctrines, objects, and spirit of his religion. This must be too obvious to require illustration. It will, we presume, be at once admitted, that the understanding must be the controlling principle. For on the views which men entertain of God, his perfections, government and law, will depend what service they render him, and with what spirit they worship him. If they imagine that God is a tyrant, they will serve him as slaves; or if, unmindful of the sanctions of his law, they allow themselves in an unwarrantable confidence in his mercy, as if that were the only attribute exercised in the government of his creatures — they will not serve him at all. If they believe, that religion consists in the reception of certain dogmas, or in compliance with certain forms, they will busy themselves to embrace these dogmas, and will make an easy exchange of substance for form. If, for example, they imagine, that salvation depends, not on conditions, which they are able and required to perform, but on certain decrees of arbitrary election, with which they have no concern but as the passive subjects of such decrees, their error must

exert an injurious influence upon their practice; and,—instead of the humble, cheerful performance of duty, in the hope of divine acceptance, instead of the filial spirit of prayer, in the confidence, that we serve a Father, who hears, and a God, who will help us,—there is danger, that there be found either the arrogance of presumption, or the wretchedness of despair.

Let the understanding, therefore, be informed and established in religious truth, if we would obtain the best influences of pure Christianity. For there is a connexion, as we have seen, inseparable between faith and practice; between speculative truth and vital godliness. If it be objected to this, that we often find pious and excellent persons, with very little knowledge and a great deal of error; the answer is, besides what has already been conceded upon this point, that, defective as may be their knowledge, and numerous as may be their errors, there will be found amidst all their ignorance and mistakes a few plain, indisputable truths, which possess a controlling power over their minds and hearts, and are able to make them wise unto salvation.

It is essential also to vital Christianity, that it interest and engage the affections. The throne of religion is in the heart. The affections, it has been said, are the springs of action; and we are never prompted to any earnest pursuit, but when these are enlisted. There cannot be a question, that to make religion an effectual principle, and to give it a controlling power, our hearts must be engaged. They must feel, and feel deeply, the transcendent grandeur, solemnity, and importance of its truths, and the invaluable interests of the immortal soul. They

must be pervaded by the love of God, by reverence and gratitude towards Jesus Christ, by earnest desires after holiness. At the same time, we shall perceive, that as religion has to do with the tenderest and the deepest sentiments of the heart, it must from its very nature preclude all ostentation. It shrinks instinctively from what is boastful and pretending. If it give utterance to the secrets of the soul, it is always with humility, and with a reverential regard to the decorums of time, and place, and circumstance. It loathes all parade and ostentation, as the sure indication of a low state both of religious knowledge and religious sensibility.

Again, the spirit of vital Christianity demands habitual devotion. He who feels truly, will pray frequently and earnestly. He will regard prayer as the instrument of his virtue, the source of his strength, the solace of his sorrows, the reviving of his hope, the entrance of light and joy to his heart. Under a deep sense of its value and blessing, he will not fail, he will not cease to pray. He will go to the mercy seat and return thence with the delight of heart, with which we hold converse with a beloved and venerated friend. There may, indeed, be wanderings, there may be intermissions, and sometimes the world with its temptations or cares may intrude upon his thoughts; but as a prevailing characteristic, there will be the life of devotion. So essential is this, that it may be asserted without exception, that there can be no vital religion, where there is not the habit and the love of prayer.

This spirit will produce a tenderness of heart and conscience. There will be great susceptibility to whatever is connected with religion, or has any influence upon

our religious state. A man, whose affections are thoroughly engaged upon any object, looks with solicitude upon everything that has the least relation to that object; and the true Christian can regard nothing as indifferent, which can promote or retard, even in the smallest degree, his spiritual growth. His conscience is tender; and he feels every offence, as committed against a most kind and indulgent Father. He thinks fearfully of the odiousness and folly of all sin, its ingratitude as well as its danger.

This tenderness of heart is peculiarly favorable to the purest influences of religion, and is represented as a state acceptable in the sight of God. 'Because thy heart was tender,' said Jehovah to the penitent monarch of Israel, 'and thou hast humbled thyself before me, I have even heard thee, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace.'

In intimate connexion with this, let it not be forgotten, that true religion will produce and be accompanied by habitual seriousness. By this is not to be understood gloom, melancholy, distrust of God and his providence, or anything inconsistent with that 'joy in God and in our Lord Jesus Christ,' which it is the influence of the Christian's hope to inspire; but the seriousness of wise and holy men; of those who believe, that there is reality in religion, and that subjects of infinite interest, even the safety and peace of their immortal souls, depend upon present conduct and character. It is indeed impossible to think at all upon the objects, duties, prospects, and solemn alternatives of religion without seriousness. He who can trifle upon such a theme; he, who has even a suspicion, to say nothing of a firm conviction, that his whole future destiny, the happiness or the wretchedness of his immor-

tal soul, depends upon his obedience here, cannot but be serious. Upon such a theme, carelessness or indifference is madness.

Another most important effect of vital religion will be to cherish and improve our social virtues. It will exert a happy influence over our domestic and social relations, diffusing through all our conversation its own spirit of benevolence and love, making us 'kindly affectioned one towards another, in honor preferring one another.' With just views of the nature of the religion of Christ, and of our mutual relations and dependencies, we shall see the utter inconsistency of every form of censoriousness or uncharitableness. The better we understand the mind of Christ, the more deeply we enter into the intent of his religion, the more humble and forbearing shall we become. With a strong sense of our infirmities and sins, we shall be the more ready to regard with tenderness those of our fellow-disciples: and though, as the apostle enjoins, we shall distinguish things that differ, not putting darkness for light or light for darkness, nor letting the evil we see in a brother to be to us as his good; we shall never suffer even our keenest perception of these differences to impair the kindness of our temper. It will be one of the first and best lessons of vital Christianity, that love is the fulfilling of the law; that one of the most acceptable tokens of our 'having passed from death unto life,' from sin to holiness, is our 'unfeigned love of the brethren;' and that whatever may be our professions, however high our attainments in other regards, we may be certain, that we are strangers to genuine religion, till we have put away all malice and uncharitableness, and are 'kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven us.'

In truth, there is nothing more opposed to true Christianity, than the spirit of bitterness and alienation. This is that spirit of anti-Christ, against which the apostle warns us; far more dangerous than any speculative errors, or mistakes in doctrine, and is precisely that *heresy*, which Saint Paul pronounces damnable. If, therefore, we would try our interest in the character and hopes of vital religion, we must ask ourselves, whether its fruits are seen in our tempers and lives. Does it diffuse its gentle and benevolent influence through our social and domestic relations? Does it make us kind, affectionate, faithful, as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and dependents? Under its influence are we less worldly and covetous, envious and resentful? are we less tenacious of our own rights, and less willing to take advantage of the wants, or infirmities of others? In fine, is the kingdom of God within us; in its meek and humble, its kind and forgiving temper, has it found its place, and does it hold possession of our hearts?

It must not be omitted, that the character of spirituality, or of heavenly mindedness, is essential to inward religion. Under this comprehensive term are included just views of the present world, regulated affections and desires, contentment and submission under trials, and ardent pursuit of things heavenly. It seeks first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof; and rests for comfort under every sorrow and for strength in all temptation, on the promised grace of God and the hope that is full of immortality.

Lastly, and above all, vital religion implies and will produce universal obedience. Without this, in-

deed, we are taught by an authority not to be denied, that all else is nothing. He that talks of his love to God, and his liveliness of faith, and his rapturous experiences, and yet transgresses or neglects the law of God, may please himself and get a name among his fellow-mortals, but what shall he do, when in the light of God's judgment, and in the retributions of eternity, it shall be said unto him, 'I never knew you; depart from me, thou worker of iniquity.'

II. From the nature of the affections, which true religion inspires, we may infer something of the manner in which the religious character may be exhibited or expressed.

And here, it must be obvious to remark, that as the influence, which religion is designed to exert upon the character is of a moral nature, operating silently upon the affections and understanding, its best evidences will not be found in any outward show, or glaring exhibition, suited to attract the gaze or admiration of the world. This would ill accord with the nature either of the truths, or of the relations, which religion itself implies. These are of the highest and most sacred that we can imagine; — truths, whose objects are God, and Christ, and eternity; — relations, of no temporary duration, but of the creature, frail, sinful, yet immortal with the Being of beings; with the 'First fair and glorious,' with the omnipotent and spotless God. It especially involves our own personal individual relations with Him, as our Father, protector, benefactor, and Judge; including, therefore, all those affections, hopes or fears, with which the needy, dependent, and sinful child can regard such a being as God. It concerns, therefore, the deepest and

the strongest emotions of the soul; and it almost instinctively rejects that exhibition and parade, which we are not willing, indeed, to condemn as absolutely inconsistent with sincerity, because we are aware of various influences from early education, habits, sympathies, but which experience and observation compel us, we repeat, to regard as indicative of a low state, both of religious knowledge and religious sensibility. Vital piety supposes, by its very name, nearness and intimate communion with God. It will therefore repress within us all vanity and conceit, everything approaching to presumption or arrogance. The haughty looks of men it will humble, and God alone will be exalted. If we consider, also, its immediate exercises and employments, we shall perceive, that such feelings must enter essentially into its character and very essence. Its life is prayer; and to this, the spirit of humility and of reverence, utterly incompatible with all pretence and exhibition, is essential. It demands and it cherishes humble penitence, deep sorrow and shame of heart, for all sin; and this obviously precludes whatever is boastful or ostentatious. Its peculiar spirit, its fairest and choicest fruits, are in gentleness, meekness, and love; in the subjection of the passions, in the stillness of prayer, in the quietness of content, in deep humility, in the tenderness of charity and love.

And if, from such general reflections as these upon the nature and true influences of religion, we turn to the character and instructions of Christ, in relation to his own dispensation, we shall find these views as to the evidences or proofs of its existence abundantly confirmed. It is declared of his kingdom, that it should come without observation. 'Behold,' said Jehovah by his prophet,

'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break; and the smoking flax shall he not quench.' And when he came, in fulfilment of such predictions, and of the will of God, who had appointed him, it was indeed a kingdom without observation. How humble, how peaceful, how far removed from all ostentation of earthly grandeur! He uttered the sublimest truths, but with what mildness and simplicity! He performed the most astonishing works, but, as it has been well observed, with a quietness and composure, almost as admirable as the works themselves. Who ever exhibited a more perfect pattern of devotion? yet how free from all transport, tumult, and passion! So that scarcely less in the greatness of his power, than in the gentleness of his affections, or the kindness of his intercourse, he might propose to them his own example, 'Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.'

With this tranquil, unobtrusive character, so wonderful when viewed in connexion with the dignity and majesty, which he displayed as the Son of God, perfectly accord the instructions of his religion, as given by himself and by his apostles; distinctly intimating, as they do, the manner in which its spirit is to be expressed.

When he declared in the synagogue, that he had come to preach glad tidings to the meek, and to bind up the broken heart; when he invited to the consolations and hopes of his religion, those who were weary and heavy laden; when he set before his disciples a little child as an emblem of the spirit of his religion; and declared, that unless they imbibed the same affectionate and docile

temper, they should not enter his kingdom; when he pronounces his blessing on the poor, and humble in spirit; when he praises the small, but sincere offering of the poor widow, who casts in her mite with the richer gifts of the temple; when he commends the humility of the penitent publican, and rewards the patient, modest perseverance of the Syrophenician, and the grateful faith of the blind beggar; when, with reiterated precept, he inculcates the necessity, and shows the beauty of forgiveness, patience, long-suffering, and charity; when, by his apostles also, he teaches, that the fruits of the spirit are love, gentleness, meekness, and all goodness, we may see for ourselves the nature of his religion, and the quiet, unpretending manner, in which some of its choicest and holiest influences are to be displayed.

'He is not a Jew,' says the apostle, 'who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.' This eloquent description of a true son of Abraham may be applied in all its extent and beauty to the disciple of Christ. What Paul declares of the Jew, we may declare of the Christian. His religion is not, and cannot be, a religion of form. It breathes itself, as we have said, through his soul. He is not, therefore, clamorous in profession, but fruitful in deeds; not resting in name, but anxious to do the things which his master has commanded him. He remembers, too, that besides his own virtue, he is bound to help by his example the virtue of others. 'He has something else to do, besides taking care of his own soul.' He knows, that it is not enough for him

to cherish the love of God in his own heart; but that it is part of his duty to recommend that love to others; and, when suitable opportunity occurs, to prove that it has within him a sanctifying and controlling power. It is not sufficient for him to give of his alms to the needy. He must make his benevolence acceptable, by the gentleness, kindness, and compassion, with which he imparts it; lest in performing the outward act of charity, he be guilty of inflicting a grievous wound. Again, he may be called to rebuke his neighbor; but if in the discharge of this painful duty, he want the grace of the lesser virtues; if he reprove with ill-temper, with austerity, or any show of superiority, as if he triumphed in his brother's sin, he makes his own good to be evil spoken of, and will lose the reward of the self-denial, which every instance of reproof ought to suppose.

In all our estimate of the evidences or indications of vital religion, we are not to overlook what are sometimes called the lesser virtues. They cannot with any safety be neglected; and the constant, exemplary attention to these in the familiar intercourse of life may be among the most substantial proofs we can give to others of the 'life of God in the soul.' It has been justly and acutely remarked, that regard to them maintains tenderness of conscience; and that as the indulgence of the lesser faults leads to the commission of the greatest crimes, so we can never assure ourselves, that we shall religiously practise great virtues, unless we are faithful in those that are least. They may be considered, therefore, as the sentinels of virtue. By their repetition, and the frequency of the occasions for the exercise of them, they more than compensate for what may seem wanting to their impor-

tance. Opportunities for signal displays of the influence of our religion seldom occur. The great proportion of Christians may pass their whole lives without one such. But with every day, within our families, in the intercourse of friendship, or of daily business, there are calls for little kindnesses, for little sacrifices and self-denials; and in the subjection of a favorite propensity, in the stifling of an unworthy thought, or an uncharitable word, we may give the most unequivocal evidence of the power of our religion. There is scarcely a day, or an hour, in which the Christian may not thus show out of a good conversation the power of his faith, and silently, but effectually, bring honor to his profession. There is scarcely a moment, in which he may not thus himself be making some progress in the heavenly life. For whether he eat, or drink, or whatsoever he does, he does all to the glory of God.

Nor, finally, does he forget, that with the moral precepts, he is called also to the observance of the positive ordinances of the gospel; and in this respect, as well as others, to give testimony to the sincerity of his faith. He regards the rites of Christianity as means; but as means to a most important end; and the authority, which enjoins them, as not less sacred than the authority which calls him to virtue. For, as he reasons, if he is bound to obtain the one, he is bound, also, to improve the other. And if his Master had commanded some hard thing, as the evidence of discipleship, would he not have done it? While, therefore, first of all, he seeks their good influences upon his heart, desirous, that in the obligations of his baptismal vows, in every offering of his children to God, and every grateful commemoration of his Saviour's

love, he may himself become more pure and faithful; he welcomes them, also, as the expressions of his faith, and humbly seeks, that through his example, others may be led to glorify their Father who is in heaven. His own improvement is his first motive; the benefit of his fellow-disciples the next.

We have exhibited, as our limits have permitted, some general views of what may be regarded as essential to vital Christianity. There is nothing here opposed to the pure, simple, yet fervent spirit of the gospel of Christ. Here is a religion, as we believe, alike removed from the indifference of the worldly, and the blind transports of the fanatic; something, which we can all of us understand, and admire, and practise; which can give us all we need as a rule of life; as our solace in care and sorrow; our hope in death, and our light to immortality. For a religion, like this, we should labor and pray, that it may be received and increased within and around us; and that our love of it may abound more and more, in knowledge and in all goodness.

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